

Rights violations

Document highlights facts on US' arbitrary detention

WORLD, PAGE 7

**System to flag pregnancies of girls under age 14**

CHINA, PAGE 4

**Carpet magic**

Manufacturer gains competitive edge with top-quality products

BUSINESS FOCUS, PAGE 10

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 2023

Thailand wildfire

A wildfire rages through Khao Laem National Park, Nakorn Nayok province, Thailand, on Wednesday. REUTERS

Chinese level of trust in govt tops global list

By ZHANG YI
zhangyi@chinadaily.com.cn

The Chinese government's efforts to maintain economic growth and keep improving people's lives are major factors behind the high level of trust in China's government among the nation's citizens, a level that has surpassed other countries in recent surveys.

Among Chinese citizens interviewed by Edelman, a leading global public relations consultancy, 89 percent said that they trust their government — the highest percentage of all the countries surveyed.

About 32,000 respondents from 28 countries participated in the online surveys in November.

The China report of the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer, an annual trust and credibility survey, was released on Wednesday.

The percentage of Chinese who

“(China) has done a good job of helping lift up all of society, and it hasn't resulted in some of the wide gaps that exist elsewhere in the world where there are others being left behind.”

Matthew Harrington,
Edelman Global president and chief operating officer

said they trust their government has consistently remained at the top of the list in Edelman reports in recent years.

Edelman Global President and Chief Operating Officer Matthew Harrington said there is a sense of understanding and appreciation for China's government that focuses on the continued growth and prosperity of the population.

The government worked hard to protect its citizens during the COVID-19 epidemic over the past three years, which also resulted in trust from the population, he said.

Fan Hong, director of the National Image Communication and Research Center at Tsinghua University, said the high level of trust showed that in the face of a challenging external environment, the Chinese government has continued to take positive actions.

Efforts were made by the government in solving social issues, promoting economic development,

improving people's lives and creating a green environment, and this has won recognition and trust from the people, she said.

The report indicated that economic optimism is flagging around the world, with 24 of 28 countries seeing all-time lows in the number of people who think their families will be better off in five years, while Chinese respondents remained optimistic about the economy.

“China remains an extraordinarily important economic force in the world economy,” said Harrington, adding that people around the world, as well as institutions ranging from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to economic think tanks, are optimistic about China's economic growth this year.

See *Survey*, page 3

US bill called move to hamper China's growth

It would require State Department to push for revoking nation's 'developing country' status

By ZHAO RUINAN
zhaoruinan@chinadaily.com.cn

The United States House of Representatives' unanimous passage of a bill on Monday calling for revocation of China's “developing country” status shows that Washington, driven by a zero-sum mentality, intends to hamper China's growth, experts said.

The so-called “PRC Is Not a Developing Country Act” would, if enacted, require the US State Department to advocate that international organizations change China's status from a developing country to an upper middle-income country, high-income country or developed country.

Inside
Editorial,
page 11

Introduced by Representative Young Kim, a Republican from California, and Gerry Connolly, a Democrat from Virginia, the bill urges the US government to oppose the labeling or treatment of China as a developing country under the terms of any treaty or other international agreement to which the US is a party, such as in the World Trade Organization.

It was unclear whether the bill would be considered in the Senate. For a bill to become law, both the House and the Senate would need to pass it and the president's signature would be required.

Xu Liping, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' National Institute of International Strategy, said the move shows the intention of some politicians in Washington to hamper Chi-

na's development and maintain US global hegemony.

“Determining whether a country is a developing or developed country is not the job of any single country, but the international community,” he said.

In addition, a country itself should be the one to initiate any change in its status, rather than having it determined by another country, Xu said, adding that passage of the bill was illogical and reflected ulterior motives.

Zhao Yongsheng, a professor at the Institute of Regional and International Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said there is no universal consensus as to what constitutes a developed country, or what can be defined as a developing country.

Criteria range from economic factors such as per capita GDP to noneconomic factors like average life expectancy, levels of education and technological development, Zhao said.

Wei Nanzhi, a researcher at the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the move is an “old trick” of the US.

“Setting an agenda against what Washington perceives as a threat, and then working with its allies to hype it up — this is a common practice for the US as a hegemonic country.”

“The US government likes to set up a strong external enemy to push forward internal changes. This is, in fact, a domestic mobilization with an underlying warning sign to Americans: China is a dangerous enemy, and we must unite to solve our internal problems,” she said.

Budget protests in Japan



People protest in Tokyo on Tuesday against the Japanese government's defense spending plans. Japan's parliament has enacted a 14.38 trillion yen (\$868.38 billion) budget for 2023, including record allocations for controversial defense plans amid political and public opposition, and against the backdrop of the country's dire fiscal health. JIANG QIAOMEI / XINHUA

COUPLES PUT MARRIAGE ON THE BACK BURNER

Financial pressures deter those in big cities from starting a family

By ZHOU WENTING
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Zhang Jingjing, 33, has been in a relationship for three and a half years, but while spending a lot of time with her boyfriend, she feels no obligation to marry him.

“It's more like an agreement

In-depth

between us to continue the relationship, rather than taking it to the next stage,” said Zhang, who comes from Beijing and uses an alias.

The couple met after she relocated to Shanghai for work in 2019.

Although Zhang draws the line at marrying her partner, she said he is gentle, easygoing and kind. He was born in Taiwan and raised in the United States, so if the couple did decide to marry, they would need to decide where to settle.

“Many women feel the pressure to be married when they reach the age of 30 or so, but not me. I no longer care about how others view me, which has lifted a great weight off my mind,” said Zhang, who works for a multinational company.

See *Marriage*, page 2

Manila shouldn't expand defense pact with Washington

Despite some local opposition, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr recently announced his approval of the expansion of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement to allow the United States to build military facilities in four new locations in the Philippines.

Although the locations have not been announced, the ones that have been discussed are intended to provide the US military with greater operational access to the

WORLD WATCH

By Rommel C. Banlaoi

Taiwan Straits, Korean Peninsula and South China Sea.

When the Philippines and the US signed the cooperation agreement in 2014, the two countries agreed to train together in order to strengthen their interoperability in responding to natural disasters, humanitarian situations, terrorist threats and maritime security challenges.

Under the agreement, the Philippine government allowed the construction of five US military facilities: Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, Basa Air Base in Pampanga, Antonio Bautista Air Base in Palawan, Mactan-Benito Ebuen Air Base in Cebu and Lumbia Air Base in Cagayan de Oro.

Since then, Philippine and US forces have held joint and combined military exercises in the areas of humanitarian assistance and disaster response, search and rescue operations, counterterrorism cooperation and maritime domain awareness.

What has been downplayed by the Philippine and US authorities about the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement is its strategic intention to counter China's growing international influence, particularly in the South China Sea.

In a joint media briefing with Philippine Senior Undersecretary and Officer in Charge of the Department of National Defense Carlito Galvez on Feb 2, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III admitted that the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement

(EDCA) is “part of our efforts to modernize our alliance, and these efforts are especially important as the People's Republic of China continues to advance its illegitimate claims in the West Philippine Sea.”

Thus, the agreement's larger goal is to support US efforts to gain a strategic advantage over China amid their worsening relations.

The Pentagon has requested that the US Congress approve the \$842 billion budget for the Department of Defense in order to modernize the US military as it prepares for a possible confrontation with China.

See *Pact*, page 3

INSIDE
Chances to boost RMB should be seized
Global Views, page 13

www.chinadailyglobal.com

Member of
ANN
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Newsstand prices:
US \$1; Canada C\$1;
UK £1; EU €1;
Kenya 50 Kenya Shilling
Asia Pacific: Thailand 120
thb; Philippines 120 php; Myanmar 2000 kyat;
Japan 210 yen; Dubai 10 dirham; Pakistan 300 rupee

PAGE TWO

Typical problems faced by couples

- ✗ Raising kids
- ✗ Children's education
- ✗ Buying an apartment
- ✗ Financial burden
- ✗ Midlife crisis

Marriage: Traditional values reassessed

From page 1

Like Zhang and her boyfriend, who is 37, many members of the younger generation living and working in big cities no longer feel that marriage is essential.

In February, a survey of some 5,000 single people in the 20 to 40 age group living in Shanghai found that more than 50 percent of them were in no rush to get married. The survey was carried out by the Shanghai Committee of the Chinese Communist Youth League.

Data from provincial civil affairs departments show that people in many regions are postponing marriage, and the average age for a first marriage in economically advanced areas such as the Yangtze River Delta Region is now generally older than 30.

The number of marriage registrations in Jiangsu province fell by 11.7 percent last year, the fifth successive annual decline. In Shanghai, the average age for marriage was 30.9 years last year, compared with 30.5 the previous year.

The survey also found that two-thirds of unmarried people were interested in starting a relationship, and that having a partner, but saying "no" to marriage may become commonplace for couples in big cities.

Zhang said she is happy with the relationship she has with her boyfriend. They used to work at the same company in Beijing, and a considerable amount of their current work content is similar, so they have much to share with each other.

"He is a good partner, and I feel comfortable and relaxed when I am with him, but if we ever start talking about marriage, I know things will become much more complicated," she said.

Discussion of marriage would include whether the couple should start a family, said Zhang, who accepts the idea of being a mother, but doesn't think a child is a necessity in life.

She is also worried about the fierce competition parents face in finding a good school for their children and sending them to extracurricular classes. Zhang said if she had a child, she would consider moving to Taiwan for the island's educational resources. However, her boyfriend can earn more in Shanghai than in Taiwan.

Moreover, Zhang is reluctant to marry, as she fears she would not get along with her boyfriend's parents.

"I don't have much interest in his parents, and I believe we can be best to continue our relationship if it involves as few people as possible," she said.

Relocating to Shanghai made Zhang more determined to enjoy life and not worry about the views of others. "Living in a new environment without family gives me more time to think and make decisions independently," she said.

She also feels that people in Shanghai have a strong sense of personal space, and try to avoid invading the privacy of others.

"When I worked in Beijing, colleagues often recommended single men to me after learning that I didn't have a boyfriend. However, in Shanghai, people seldom ask questions about coworkers' private lives. There is a greater tolerance here toward different lifestyles," she said.

The attitude of Zhang's parents has changed during the past two years. They used to seize every chance they could to urge her to get married, but they no longer do so, as some of their friends' children have ended their marriages after several years. These separated couples now lead difficult lives as juggling work and taking care of their children.

Least suitable

Liang Yong'an, 68, professor of literature at Fudan University in Shanghai, said those born in the late 1990s or early 21st century are possibly the least suitable for marriage in Chinese history.

He said that having children to continue the family line used to be all-important in Chinese society. People became accustomed to living with large families, where they were immersed in the collective values of their parents and even grandparents.

Now, values have become diverse, and intimate relationships adopt different forms and don't necessarily lead to marriage, Liang said.

"Moreover, many members of the younger

generation tend to be self-centered, as they grew up in single-child families ... but they may lack a common awareness of one another. This is a generation that best fits an independent lifestyle."

Yu Jia, a researcher at Peking University's Center for Social Research, said: "Being more self-centered doesn't necessarily mean that someone is more selfish. We should understand that young people today prioritize fulfilling their personal values, rather than being bound by traditional concepts and collective awareness."

Tian Zhu, 35, a media worker in Shanghai, started a relationship with her fifth boyfriend six months ago, but she recently realized that he is

not "Mr Right".

"He is not the one who loves me the most, nor the one I love most, but he can be my partner for now, as it feels good to have a companion," Tian said.

Despite getting along with her boyfriend in the time they have been together, Tian feels that marrying him is out of the question, as she is unhappy with some of his habits. He doesn't want to start a family, while she is eager to become a mother.

Results of a survey released by the dating/matchmaking website jia yuan.com in February showed that people with more experience of

relationships are less likely to marry.

Liang said the diverse choices that people have today are evidence of the progress made by an advanced society.

"Different choices reflect people's independent awareness of living in and understanding of their existence in the world," Liang said.

"Instead of just finding a partner for life and believing that affection for another person can be cultivated after spending time together, which some people did in the past, younger people now focus more on pursuing their heartfelt aspirations," he said.

The high cost of marrying and starting a family is another factor deterring those living and working in big cities from marriage.

Tian's boyfriend said the heavy financial burden of raising a child is the main reason he abandoned plans to start a family.

"I know that my quality of life will be different if I have to raise a child, but I don't want that much pressure," said the man, surnamed Zhu, who earns about 10,000 yuan (\$1,446) a month from his steady job at a State-owned enterprise in Shanghai.

A post widely circulated online states that only one in every 400 men in Shanghai meets the requirements for an ideal partner, which typically include appearance, height, income, permanent residency, and an apartment in the city.

Yu, from Peking University, said: "In a relationship, the two sides have only to consider their feelings for each other. But for marriage, affection and material conditions need to be taken into account."

Grandparents' role

The arrival of a baby often results in a relationship becoming a marriage for many. However, everyday pressures, including financial considerations, mean some couples are reluctant to start a family.

Research by Huazhong University of Science and Technology's School of Sociology found that a couple's finances fall by 5.6 percent after having a baby, and if they have a second child, their finances drop by a further 7.1 percent.

Grandparents are key to helping raise children. In 2019, a survey in Jiangsu province found that paternal and maternal grandparents in more than 90 percent of families with two children helped take care of the offspring.

Women's views toward motherhood are also changing. In 2021, a survey carried out by the China Population and Development Research Center found that about one-third of Chinese women who are 35 or younger no longer believe that having a child makes life complete.

Zuo Yi, 36, a Shanghai resident who married four years ago, said women should be encouraged to pursue better lives for themselves, rather than meet the expectations of others, especially in starting a family.

"The reason older women are often less popular in the dating market is that those in their 30s are generally less fertile than women in their 20s," Zuo said.

"I totally support women who want to become mothers, and they have a brave decision to make, but it's important for every individual to make their own choices."

After seeing reluctance among some of their friends' husbands to raise children, some women say they are not interested in starting a family themselves.

The nation's fertility rate is falling, and the average family size is shrinking. Data from the China Family Planning Association show there were 2.62 people per family in China in 2020, a fall of 0.48 from 2010.

Research by Beijing Normal University's School of Social Development and Public Policy found that cohabitation before marriage often results in couples deciding to delay starting a family after they wed.

The research results, published in November, also found the premarital cohabitation rate in China surged from 4 percent in the 1980s to 40 percent in the 2010s.

Experts believe that cohabitation before marriage provides an opportunity for couples to bond, making it less imperative to start a family.



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

TOP NEWS

Pass with flying colors



Aircraft of the Italian air force aerobatic unit release colored smoke as they fly over St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, Rome, on Tuesday during celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of the Italian air force. LAURENT EMMANUEL / AFP

Economy enjoys solid foundations, Li says

Premier highlights expanding opening-up, upholding multilateralism

By CAO DESHENG in Boao, Hainan
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Premier Li Qiang expressed his optimism on Wednesday about China's economy and called on the international community to uphold multilateralism and maintain the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains.

Li made the remarks during a meeting with Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund in Boao, Hainan province. The IMF chief is in China to attend the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023.

Li said that since the start of this year, the Chinese economy has stabilized and maintained the momentum of its recovery.

Noting that China's economy enjoys solid foundations, broad prospects and a promising future, the premier said the nation will strengthen macro-policy coordination, strive to unleash potential for consumption and investment,

“We have the confidence and capability to meet the goals and fulfill the tasks set out for this year's growth.”

Premier Li Qiang, speaking during a meeting with Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund

unswervingly expand opening-up, and prevent and defuse risks in a proper manner.

“We have the confidence and capability to meet the goals and fulfill the tasks set out for this year's growth,” he said.

The premier underlined the need to uphold multilateralism, and called on the international

community to safeguard the security and stability of global industrial and supply chains.

China will continue to deepen cooperation with the IMF and advance the development of global governance in a fairer and more equitable direction, he added.

The IMF chief said that China is expected to account for more than one-third of global economic growth this year.

The IMF appreciates China's upholding of multilateralism and its important contributions to preventing debt crises in developing countries, Georgieva said, adding that the IMF is ready to further deepen its cooperation with China.

In a separate meeting in Boao on Wednesday with Cote d'Ivoire Prime Minister Patrick Achi, Li hailed the rapid development of bilateral ties in an all-around way in recent years, and said that China is willing to join with the African country on the path toward

development and revitalization.

China appreciated Cote d'Ivoire's support for the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, and its firm position in upholding the one-China principle, Li said.

The nation will continue to support Cote d'Ivoire in pursuing a path toward modernization suited to its national conditions, he added.

Noting that China is willing to strengthen synergy with Cote d'Ivoire in development plans, the premier said that the nation will continue to encourage Chinese enterprises to increase investment and promote business development in the African country, and continue to deepen cooperation in agriculture, infrastructure, digital economy, new energy and green development.

China supports Cote d'Ivoire in promoting its security and development, and is willing to help the country with its efforts in anti-terrorism and upholding stability in accordance with its needs, Li said. Achi congratulated China on its victory in the fight against COVID-19, and thanked China for its support for his country in combating the pandemic and in infrastructure construction.

Cote d'Ivoire abides by the one-China principle and is willing to actively participate in the joint building of the Belt and Road, he said.

Tsai's 'transit' through US strongly opposed

By YANG ZEKUN and MO JINGXI

China is firmly opposed to any visit by the leader of the Taiwan authorities to the United States in any name or on any pretext and the US' violation of the one-China principle by having any form of contact with the region's authorities, officials said on Wednesday.

China will take countermeasures if the island's leader Tsai Ing-wen meets with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, they said.

Tsai is reportedly scheduled to visit some Central American nations from Wednesday to April 7, during which she plans to “transit” through the US and meet with McCarthy.

China has repeatedly made solemn representations to the US over Tsai's so-called “transit” through the US, said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning in response to a question at a news conference in Beijing.

“Past mistakes do not justify new ones, and the repetition of these mistakes does not make them legitimate,” Mao said, adding that the “transit” plan is a cover for the Taiwan leader's attempt to seek breakthroughs and propagate “Taiwan independence”.

The spokeswoman rejected remarks that China is overreacting on the issue, and said it is the US that keeps conniving with and supporting “Taiwan independence” separatist forces.

“It is not China, but the US and ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces that are creating problems or making provocations,” she said, urging the US to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiques.

Mao said the US should deliver on its leaders' commitment to stopping all forms of official interaction with Taiwan and not supporting “Taiwan independence,” “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan”.

The US should stop upgrading its substantive exchanges with Taiwan, as well as acts that obscure and hollow out the one-China principle. In addition, the US should not keep calling for “guardrails” for China-US relations on the one hand, but on the other hand, engage in dangerous acts that undermine the political foundation of bilateral ties, Mao said. “China will closely follow the latest developments and resolutely safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity,” she said.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, said that should a meeting between Tsai and McCarthy take place during the so-called “transit”, it will be another provocation that seriously violates the one-China principle, undermines China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and damages the peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits.

“China firmly opposes this and will resolutely respond with countermeasures,” Zhu said.

The “transit” by the Taiwan leader is in essence part of provocative efforts to “seek independence by relying on the US” and is also an attempt to create “one China, one Taiwan”, “two Chinas” and other forms that violate the one-China principle, she said.

“Tsai plans to find opportunities to peddle the idea of ‘Taiwan independence’ in the international community and seek support from anti-China forces in the US,” Zhu said.

The Taiwan leader will not just stay at the airport or a hotel during her “transit” but also wants to contact US government officials and members of the US Congress under various pretexts to seek “official exchanges” between the US and the region, and collude with external anti-China forces, Zhu said. “We urge the US to refrain from arranging Tsai's ‘transit’ visit, bar any contact between her and US officials and take concrete actions to honor its solemn commitment of not supporting ‘Taiwan independence’.”

People from dozens of local parties and groups protested in Taipei against Tsai's “transit” through the US, and condemned Tsai and the Democratic Progressive Party for their attempts to collude with the US to undermine the island.

The protesters said Tsai knows that seeking “Taiwan independence” is a suicidal path and yet she deceives the people into following that path. She is fully aware that the US is the world's biggest warmonger, which is sabotaging world peace, but she is still pushing the people of Taiwan toward the edge of an abyss, they said.

Tsai's “transit” through the US is bound to have a serious negative impact on the situation across the Taiwan Straits. Her administration and the DPP follow the US' orders, fully cooperate with US politicians' plans to destroy Taiwan and compromise the safety of the Taiwan people, the protesters said.

Taiwan currently faces a severe shortage of water and eggs, and is grappling with rising electricity prices, but Tsai and the DPP continue to neglect the sufferings of the people and seek their own gains, they added.

Contact the writers at yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

Survey: Happiness poll had similar results

From page 1

The optimism could be seen in the recent visits to China by many foreign business people, including Apple CEO Tim Cook, who spoke at the recent China Development Forum about the importance of China to his company's future.

Given the economic growth prospects, Harrington said the Chinese government and the business community have the opportunity to deliver on the hope that Chinese families have for better lives in the coming years, he said.

He added that China “has done a good job of helping lift up all of society, and it hasn't resulted in some of the wide gaps that exist

elsewhere in the world where there are others being left behind.”

The results are consistent with the findings of another recent global survey. According to the Global Happiness 2023 report released recently by Ipsos, a leading global market research company, China has the highest level of happiness, at 91 percent.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a news conference this month that “people's sense of happiness is like a mirror. It tells us the values that drive the nation and the competence of its government.”

Over the past 10 years, China has implemented a people-centered philosophy of development. The

goal is to meet the people's ever-growing need for a better life and deliver a stronger sense of fulfillment, happiness and security to the people, he said.

Edelman's reports in recent years have shown a wide gap in the respective trust levels of China and the United States. About 42 percent of US respondents said that they trust their nation's government, which is 47 percentage points lower than the results for China.

Harrington said the low trust in government in the US is due to the economy in the past decade and the gap between haves and have-nots, which has resulted in polarization, leading to a trust gap.



Gigantic creature

A full cast of a titanosaur *Patagotitan mayorum* skeleton, measuring 37 meters in length and 5 meters in height, is displayed at the Natural History Museum in London on Tuesday. The cast is based on a gigantic thigh bone uncovered from a ranch in the Patagonia region of South America in 2010 and 200 other skeleton pieces recovered by fossil experts. PA

Pact: Expansion of defense agreement to harm Philippines' interests

From page 1

General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stressed during a recent budget hearing that China's current actions “are moving it down the path toward confrontation and potential conflict with its neighbors and possibly the United States”. He added that “preparing for war is extraordinarily expensive, but it's not as expensive as fighting a war. And this budget prevents war and prepares us to fight if necessary”.

Apparently, the expansion of the Enhanced Defense Coopera-

tion Agreement is part of US access arrangements in Asia to decisively implement the US' military deterrence strategy and defense preparation plan against China. As such, the expansion of the agreement largely serves US military interests to counter China rather than catering to the national interests of the Philippines, which include coexisting peacefully with China.

Hence, the expansion of the defense cooperation agreement will inevitably harm the Philippines' security interests.

The Chinese embassy in Manila

has already warned that expansion of the agreement could “seriously harm Philippine national interests and endanger regional peace and stability”.

Furthermore, the Chinese embassy said, “Whereas the US claims that such cooperation is intended to help the disaster relief efforts of the Philippines, and some Americans even tout the EDCA sites as drivers of the local economy, it is plain and simple that those moves are part of the US efforts to encircle and contain China through its military alliance with (the Philippines).”

Philippine and US security officials claim that the defense cooperation agreement aims to strengthen the Philippine-US military alliance and to reaffirm the commitment of the US to defend the Philippines against external attacks. However, the agreement only deepens the Philippines' reliance on the US for its defense. Instead of relying heavily on the US for its national defense, the Philippines needs to pursue self-reliance to defend itself.

Local residents have voiced their concerns about expansion of the agreement. Governor Manuel Mamba of Cagayan Province has

already conveyed the worries of his constituents that the agreement could turn his province “into a key target of the Chinese military if a conflict involving the US military breaks out over Taiwan”.

Although he said that it “is the president's call, not mine”, he emphasized that he is “against EDCA sites in my province”, and he raised the issue of the lack of local consultations and stakeholder participation in the proposed expansion of the defense cooperation agreement.

Evidently, the US is pushing for expansion of the agreement in the

Philippines as part of the Pentagon's preparations for conflict.

Rather than promoting Philippine security interests, the expansion of the agreement will only endanger Philippine interests by possibly dragging the country into a war not of its choosing.

It is imperative that patriotic and freedom-loving Filipinos oppose the cooperation agreement and its expansion to make the Philippines a zone of peace rather than the battleground for another US proxy war.

The author, a national security analyst, is president of the Philippines-China Friendship Society. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CHINA

Underage pregnancies to be reported

Some hospitals take action on opinion paper's call for compulsory alarm system

By CANG WEI in Nanjing
cangwei@chinadaily.com.cn

Hospitals in some Chinese cities are being required to report pregnancies involving girls under the age of 14 to law enforcement.

The People's Procuratorate of Huai'an, East China's Jiangsu province, launched the reporting system recently together with the local health commission.

When a girl under the age of 14 is found to be pregnant, a red alert will automatically remind the attending doctor to report it to local police or prosecutors in the city.

The compulsory reporting system can help avoid problems such as doctors not knowing how to report, or feeling afraid to report, according to the procuratorate in Huai'an.

Han Xuejiao, deputy director of the seventh procuratorial department of Huai'an People's Procuratorate, said that the reporting system contains two separate subsystems, with one urging doctors to report and the other allowing every resident to report such cases.

The first subsystem has a three-color alarm system. When teenagers from 16 to 18 years old are found to be pregnant when receiving treatment, the system will give an alarm in yellow on the attending doctors' screens.

An orange alarm will be given when the girls are between 14 to 16 and a red alarm will be given when girls under 14 are diagnosed to be pregnant.

"It is against the law to have sex with a girl under the age of 14 and those violating the law will be convicted of rape," said Han.

"For girls from 14 to 16 years old who are pregnant, we must make sure that the sex happened after they reached 14 years old. And for girls aged 16 to 18, we must con-

firm that they were not forced when they had sex."

Some people, especially legal professionals, expressed concerns that the reporting system might violate the privacy protection of children. Some also argue that some parents, though not many, might be unwilling to report the abuse to avoid possible discrimination against their children who may have already suffered.

"We have considered the privacy protection of children and their parents' concerns," Han said.

"The reporting system is operated by the hospitals, the police and the procuratorate, which all have obligations to protect the privacy of the victims. Hospital workers who have access to the reporting system will sign a confidentiality agreement to make sure that they will not violate the victims' privacy."

The other reporting subsystem, installed on the city's frequently used government mobile app, allows anyone who registers to report information about abuse against teenagers. Those who often have close contact with children during work are especially encouraged to report any abuse they have noticed.

In May 2020, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and nine other departments jointly issued an opinion in favor of establishing mandatory reporting of such abuse.

"The reporting system echoes with the opinion and enables the doctors to have proper channels to fulfill their reporting obligations," said Han.

The cities of Yixing and Lianyungang in Jiangsu have also installed the reporting system in their hospital medical records systems.

Guo Jun in Nanjing contributed to this story.

Student corrects error in Nobel Prize report

By ZHANG ZHIHAO
zhangzhihao@chinadaily.com.cn

What's your proudest moment in college? Scoring straight As on a report card? Landing that coveted internship at your dream company? For a sophomore electronics major at Tsinghua University, it was correcting a mistake by the Nobel Prize committee and later receiving a thank you note.

In December, a student going by the alias Mu Qing was doing physics homework when he discovered an error in the last equation on page 11 of the scientific background report on the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics, according to Tsinghua University, who shared the story on Friday.

The story recently went viral on Chinese social media, attracting over 11 million views on the micro-blogging platform Sina Weibo in two days.

The equation was about quantum entanglement, a strange phenomenon in which two photons or other quantum entities behave as one unit even if spatially separated. Quantum entanglement is at the heart of many quantum technologies, including quantum computing, encryption and communication.

The correct equation should have positive signs for all four factors on the right side of the equation instead of two positives and two negatives as was shown in the report.

Mu was perplexed at first. After all, he thought he was just a brash

newcomer to physics who had the gall to question the highest authority in the field. Moreover, the erroneous labeling was inconsequential since it didn't affect the conclusion of the calculation.

But the error kept gnawing at his mind, so Mu asked his professor Wang Xiangbin for help. Instead of being dismissive of the inquiry, Wang patiently tackled the problem with Mu late into the night. After several rounds of calculations, they confirmed that the Nobel committee had made a mistake.

Wang later presented the correction to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Sara Gustavsson, communications officer at the academy, recently replied to Wang, thanking him and Mu for notifying the academy about the error.

After the story went viral, Mu asked reporters to keep him anonymous because he hadn't created any notable scientific breakthroughs. "When I get to make something really impressive, then please publish my real name," he said.

Wang said the quality he treasures the most from his students is the spirit of inquisitiveness. "Even if it was just a clerical error, it should be promptly corrected," he said.

Through this event, Wang said his students should learn that in science, everyone is equal, and there is no absolute authority. "Everybody can pose a legitimate question. Such is the beauty of physics and academia," he said.

Crack shot



Participants compete in a whistling archery contest held during the 20th Peach Blossom Tourism and Culture Festival in Nyingchi, Tibet autonomous region, on Tuesday. The contest is a traditional folk sporting event in Nyingchi. LI LIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Navy selects teen aviation trainees

By ZHAO LEI
zhaolei@chinadaily.com.cn

The People's Liberation Army Navy has started selecting graduates from junior high schools in 14 provincial-level regions for its teen aviator program.

The selection process began in late March in 14 provinces and municipalities including the provinces of Henan, Shandong, Hubei, and Jiangxi and Chongqing municipality, involving nearly 4,500 qualified applicants, according to the Navy's flight student recruitment office.

Approved by the Navy and the Ministry of Education, the program was launched in 2015 and aims to attract students who are interested in aviation and are fit for military flight.

The idea is to establish a talent pool for the Navy's shipborne aviation units.

Male students in the third grade

of junior high school in the 14 cooperating provincial-level regions are encouraged to apply for the program.

Before the teen program, all candidates selected by the Navy for its naval aviation training programs were graduates of senior high school.

According to the Navy's recruitment office, applicants for this year's teen aviator program should be born between Aug 31, 2006, and Aug 31, 2009; have a height between 162 and 181 centimeters; and be neither too thin nor overweight.

Candidates must be free of diseases such as meningitis or nephritis, and blood pressure and vision must meet the Navy's standards for its pilots.

Other criteria include clean political, legal and study records, consent from legal guardians, a strong mind, mental and physical agility, and a certain level of proficiency in English.

After passing all rounds of selection, dozens of applicants will be enrolled in the program at a cooperating high school in each of the 14 provincial-level regions, the recruitment office said.

During the three-year program, students will be given lectures and training on naval and flight knowledge and will be managed like military cadets.

In summer and winter vacations, the students will take part in tours to naval schools and front units to visit warships and talk with experienced pilots.

They will also have the opportunity to operate aircraft on their own in the presence of veteran aviators.

After three years, those who pass necessary tests will be admitted to naval aviation academies or some of China's top universities that collaborate with the Navy for pilot training.

Authorities put tighter regulations in place for tutoring firms

By ZOU SHUO
zoushuo@chinadaily.com.cn

China has set up a detailed financial management plan for tutoring institutions to prevent risks and safeguard the rights of students, parents and employees.

The plan, issued by the Ministry of Education and four other departments, asks tutoring institutions to establish an internal financial management system, raise capital based on the law, effectively manage assets and control costs.

The plan bans listed companies from establishing or participating in academic tutoring for primary or secondary school students. Foreign capital is also not allowed to control or have shares in tutoring companies.

Primary and secondary schools are banned from setting up tutoring institutions.

For non-profit tutoring institutions, their founders, persons in charge, and actual controllers are not allowed to withdraw capital, while founders of for-profit tutoring institutions are not allowed to withdraw capital.

All pre-paid service fees should be managed through a special account and be kept separate from the institutions' money.

If the institutions are closed, they should return the tuition fees to students and pay the salaries and other fees to its employees.

Han Fei, vice-professor of the Beijing National Accounting Institute, said that in recent years some tutoring companies have expanded blindly and spent a lot of money on marketing and advertising. Due to poor management, their capital ran out and they went bankrupt, while the owners disappeared with the tuition fees.

With the double reduction policy introduced in 2021 to reduce students' homework and academic tutoring burden, the regulation of tutoring institutions has been tightened, but some institutions still have not taken necessary measures to fend off risks, she said.

The plan standardizes the financial management of tutoring institutions, improves their management, prevents financial risks and promotes healthy development, she added.

Chinese team takes home haul of medals at skills Olympics for disabled

The Chinese delegation wrapped up six gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals recently at the 10th International Abilympics in Metz, a city in eastern France.

Twenty-nine players from the Chinese delegation participated in 20 events in nine different categories of the Abilympics — work skills Olympics for people with disabilities.

Even with 15 fewer contestants and nine fewer events compared with the last session, the delegation from China still achieved a remarkable result, ranking fourth among all the participating countries and regions.

Since the ninth session in 2016, the Chinese delegation has participated in the fields of advanced manufacturing, information technology and modern services. This has helped to broaden the horizons of those with disabilities, raising their scope and skills, and fields of employment.

The Chinese delegation won the championships in food carving, text processing, hairdressing, massage, crochet and embroidery, in addition to silver medals in cooking, women's dressmaking, management of network systems, building web pages, data processing, studio photography, furniture making, computer programming and wood carving.



Gold medalist Bu Yunxiu holds the Chinese flag at the award ceremony after winning an embroidery skills event at the 10th International Abilympics in Metz, France, on Saturday. GAO JING / XINHUA

In an interview with China Media Group, Sha Hongying, a silver medalist in crochet, said: "I tried myself this time. If I do it at home with this material, I might not be able to do it very well because of the limited time. I worked so hard in the competition that I finished it half an hour ahead of schedule."

Massage is a newly established event in this year's Abilympics, in which two well-experienced Chinese contestants Wang Jun and

Wang Jingfu won gold and bronze medals respectively.

The International Abilympics is one of the highest-level and largest vocational skills competitions for disabled people in the world. It aims to help those with disabilities develop vocational skills, stimulate their self-confidence and potential, and provide strong support in employment and entrepreneurship.

POLICY REVIEW

China pushing border development

New measures promote trade, RMB globalization

By ZHANG YUE zhangyue@chinadaily.com.cn

A recently issued guideline promoting the development of economic cooperation zones in border cities and cross-border zones is expected to help stabilize China's industrial and supply chains, stimulate the growth of trade in both goods and services, globalize the national currency and contribute to the growth of the economy, experts said.

Their comments were made as the Ministry of Commerce, together with 15 other ministerial level organs, issued a circular on March 17 introducing a raft of measures related to the creation of new development patterns in the zones.

The document stated that economic cooperation zones are a critical platform for cooperation with neighboring countries and regions, and in promoting the development of the Belt and Road Initiative. It also said the zones are an important fulcrum underpinning socioeconomic development for border regions and provinces, making them all the more crucial to growth.

The new measures include 15 policies in support of the zones.

Efforts will be made to improve their functions, and studies will be conducted to set up new zones, expand existing ones and enhance synergy between ports and commerce platforms.

International cooperation at the zones will also be prioritized. More incentives will be given to companies to improve cross-border logistics and capital flow.

The document also reiterated measures that support the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, including one that offers incentives and encourages border areas to participate in international trade.

In addition, the document called for incentives to support industrial innovation and to improve industrial supply chains and strategic planning for high-end and emerging industries.

By upgrading its industrial structure and aligning with international economic and trade rules, China will improve conditions to put foreign trade on firmer footing this year, said Zhao Ping, deputy head of the Academy of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Tu Xinqian, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said China has long placed importance on the development of border trade. However, he noted that the timing of the circular's release means that the country is now making it more of a priority.

"China's trade with bordering countries, particularly with Russia and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is robust and prosperous, but the central government is emphasizing the importance of border trade now to enhance trade cooperation with these countries to offset the challenges and risks of the evolving external environment," he said.

"Visibly, the importance of border trade has grown in recent years," he added, citing the recent boost to trade and economic ties between China and Russia as an example.

He said that as trade further develops, both physical and non-



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

What needs to be improved are institutional arrangements like infrastructure connections. The new circular can help improve these arrangements to better align with the RCEP agreement."

Tu Xinqian, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing

physical infrastructure needs to be improved.

Noting that the new document has placed emphasis on improving cross-border logistics and capital flow, and on implementing the RCEP agreement, Tu said that border trade transportation infrastructure was fraught with challenges, particularly railways and gas pipelines, for instance.

"Meanwhile, on the financial front, one thing to note is that border areas are also the main conduits of efforts to globalize the renminbi," he said. "In Southeast Asia, the degree of RMB globalization is already quite high."

He said that with support for border trade in the past, the new circu-

lar calls for more strategic moves, with improving capital flow as a particular point of note, and that given ongoing geopolitical tensions, "now is also a good time to promote RMB globalization, taking border trade as a fulcrum."

Tu added that China's relationship with other RCEP members is also a good reason to grow border trade.

"RCEP member countries share a rich history in terms of personnel exchange and trade," he said. "What needs to be improved are institutional arrangements like infrastructure connections. The new circular can help improve these arrangements to better align with the RCEP agreement."

As China shares borders with a number of countries, including Russia, Vietnam, Laos and Kazakhstan, promoting cross-border trade will not only inject vitality into the growth of the BRI, but will also address the imbalance in domestic regional development, said Li Hao, a researcher at the China-ASEAN Collaborative Innovation Center for Regional Development at Guangxi University in Nanning. "It is also conducive to promoting the globalization of the renminbi, and to driving investment in the development of these border and cross-border economic and trade zones," Li said.

Zhong Nan contributed to this story.

Policy Digest

Telecommunications industry expanding

China's telecommunications sector expanded steadily in the first two months of this year as a result of the creation of new businesses and infrastructure, official data showed.

The combined business revenues of companies in the sector reached 280.3 billion yuan (\$40.8 billion) during the period, up 7.9 percent year-on-year, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Businesses focused on associated sectors such as internet data centers, cloud computing and the internet of things, saw revenues rise 25.7 percent year-on-year, leading to a 5 percentage point increase in telecom revenues.

The data also revealed the steady progress China has made in advancing new infrastructure. It had 2.38 million 5G base stations by the end of February, 72,100 more than at the end of last year.

Agencies to help rural disabled find jobs

Authorities will increase efforts to help disabled people in rural areas gain access to employment, according to a notice published on March 21.

The notice, issued by the China Disabled Persons' Federation and seven other government agencies, said the move was part of efforts to achieve the previously set goal of creating 1 million new jobs for people with disabilities in rural and urban areas between 2022 and 2024.

According to the notice, specific measures include helping disabled rural landowners to earn income through productive labor and providing free technical e-commerce training to households with disabled members.

Guideline defines sexual harassment

For the first time, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and five other central government departments have issued a guideline that defines and explains sexual harassment in the workplace to protect women's rights and interests.

The guideline, which was issued on March 8 — International Women's Day — clearly states what sexual harassment is, and instructs employees and labor unions on how to handle cases. It should be used as a reference when employers establish rules regarding harassment.

According to the guideline, employers should keep information provided by complainants and findings related to investigations confidential. They should also ensure privacy is protected and refrain from causing secondary injury to victims of harassment through measures such as separating the victim and the accused in the workplace.

The six ministries also issued another guideline on March 8 that serves as a reference for protecting female employees' rights in the workplace, which pertains to matters such as employment status, wages, welfare and fertility.

The references are not legally binding but offer interpretations to the public to promote wider awareness of the law and regulations.

CHINA DAILY - XINHUA

Despite geopolitical tensions, expert still optimistic about growth

By ZHANG YUE

Despite potential challenges from evolving external conditions this year, foreign trade remains a critical component of China's development, an expert said, adding that a recent circular on boosting the development of border and cross-border economic cooperation zones will play a big role in optimizing the country's trade and economic structure.

Zhou Mi, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in

Beijing, said that the release of the document, which calls for improving the layout and functions of the zones, is well-timed, given that China has relaxed its COVID-19 epidemic measures.

Because borders and ports were operating under containment measures over the past three years, their contribution to overall growth could not be fully leveraged.

"Therefore, I think the central government wants to take advantage of the current window after the relaxation of containment measures, not only to restore the previous

border functions and cross-border economic cooperation zones, but also to explore new functions to grow and upgrade," he said. "Thanks to the new document, cooperation among border provinces, as well as cooperation at the national level with neighboring countries, can be further explored, creating a new driver for growth this year."

Since late last year, exports have been closely monitored as a key sector in determining recovery this year. Though export growth has waned somewhat since October and evolving geopolitical tensions may

add to uncertainty, Zhou said that he remains optimistic.

"I think the role of foreign trade in catalyzing growth will still be sufficient this year," Zhou said. "Certainly, there have been new developments in foreign trade, and uncertainties remain across the globe. But China has maintained its comprehensive industrial and supply chains, while domestic demand is becoming more and more diverse. This means there is still plenty of room for foreign trade growth."

Before the new guideline was released, the Ministry of Commerce

had already adopted a series of measures to spur border trade, including allowing the renminbi to be used as a settlement currency, and simplifying commodity export declarations.

The ministry has also enacted favorable policies to develop the wholesale, retail, agglomeration and distribution functions of border commodity trade markets and cultivate a number of business centers dedicated to specialized products from neighboring countries based on existing markets.

Zhou noted the specific emphasis

on upgrading, innovating and improving supply and production chains in border and cross-border economic cooperation zones to turn them into world-class commercial platforms.

"China has been working to make trade and investment sustainable for a long time, and the resilience of its supply chain is also an important manifestation of sustainable trade," Zhou said. "Faced with a complex and evolving environment, it is even more necessary to strengthen this cross-border supply chain. Such resilience is not only critical to China's economic recovery per se, but also important to boosting other countries' confidence in trade relations with China."

WORLD

Envoy: Youth key to future path of ties for US, China

By MINLU ZHANG in New York
minluzhang@chinadailyusa.com

A top Chinese envoy, speaking at a prominent leadership event, called for the voices of youth to influence exchanges and cooperation between China and the US.

"China provides stability to the world today from the perspective of globalization," said Xu Xueyuan, chargé d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in the US, in her keynote speech Saturday when she attended the 13th Duke-UNC China Leadership Summit online. She also called on young Chinese and American students to meet future challenges.

Xu said that since the beginning of its reform and opening-up, "China has actively embraced the tide of globalization and made continuous efforts along the way."

"China has gradually become an important member of the global economic and trading system. Now, with globalization in distress, China remains an 'anchor of stability' in a turbulent world," she said.

Xu said China's sustained and rapid growth "has contributed a strong impetus to global recovery". China is "building up a new development pattern at a faster pace, and forging new momentum for globalization with its high-level opening-up," she said.

"China is steadily expanding institutional openness and working to uphold the institutional basis for globalization," said Xu, adding that China is promoting the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), hoping to bring the benefits of globalization to more countries.

She raised three expectations for the young students: First, play the role as a bridge and be the voice of youth for more exchanges and cooperation between China and

the US.

Second, pursue innovation and promote international cooperation to contribute ingenuity for a better future of humanity.

Third, be open and broad-minded; make friends all over the world, and fuel global unity and development with the power of youth.

Xu also answered questions from the students on issues including China's foreign policy, China-US economic cooperation and trade, cultural exchanges, the BRI and data-privacy protection and supervision.

The summit is an annual conference jointly organized by students from Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It invites leading experts from various industries to speak on topics that are crucial to China-US relations. It provides a platform for young people from both countries and the world to learn more about China and promote the sound development of China-US relations.

Meanwhile, Xu on Tuesday was invited to visit Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia, to meet with university President Tracy Fitzsimmons and interact with teachers and students at the school.

Xu affirmed the exchange and cooperation between the school and China, and appreciated that the university still actively seeks exchanges and cooperation with Chinese universities despite tense bilateral relations and the effects of the COVID pandemic.

Xu said the friendship has made positive contributions to educational exchanges and the friendship between the two peoples.

The university also expressed its willingness to further strengthen ties with Chinese partner institutions in the post-pandemic era.

CHINA DAILY USA

NEW YORK HEADQUARTERS

1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036

Telephone: 212-537-8888

Fax: 212-537-8898

editor@chinadailyusa.com

readers@chinadailyusa.com

Subscription: 212-537-8899

Advertising: 212-537-8916

Follow us on:

twitter.com/chinadaily

facebook.com/chinadaily

usa.chinadaily.com.cn

These materials are distributed by China Daily Distribution Corp. on behalf of China Daily Beijing, China. Additional information is on file with the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON

National Press Bldg, Suite 1108 529 14th Street
NW

Washington, DC 20045

Tel: 202-662-7249

Fax: 202-662-7247

SAN FRANCISCO

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94104

Tel: 415-348-8288

Fax: 415-348-8388

SEATTLE

800 Fifth Ave, Suite 4100

Seattle, WA 98104

Tel: 206-922-2868

HOUSTON

1001 South Dairy Ashford Suite 100

Houston, TX 77077

Tel: 713-595-7660

CANADA / TORONTO

4711 Yonge Street, 10th Floor

Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K8

Tel: 416-481-5706

CHINA DAILY (ISSN 0748-6154) is published daily except weekends by China Daily USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036. Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CHINA DAILY USA, 1500 Broadway, Suite 2800, New York, NY 10036.

Vol. 38 - No.1056

Prayers amid filth



Devotees offer prayers to the sun god on Chaiti Chhath Puja festival in the polluted Yamuna River covered with a layer of toxic foam in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday. The prayers are dedicated to the sun god during the festival, which lasts for four days. SALMAN ALI VIA GETTY IMAGES

‘Foreign adversary’ property ban advances

S. Carolina Senate approves bill that would bar real property purchases by China, others

By MAY ZHOU in Houston
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

The South Carolina Senate has approved a bill that would prohibit citizens and companies of "foreign adversary" nations from buying real property in the state.

The bill is now headed to the state's House of Representatives for consideration and a vote.

The foreign adversary nations are determined by the US Department of Commerce; the list currently includes China, Russia, Cuba, Iran and North Korea.

An exception is made for legal residents from those nations with a restriction: They can buy no more than 5 acres for homestead purposes.

The leading sponsor of the bill is Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey. He equated some foreign land purchases to the Trojan Horse in the Greek story of the Trojan War.

"We need to look inside that wooden horse before we let it in the gate. And there are some countries that have given us more of a reason to look inside the wooden horse before we let it in the gate," Massey said.

During debate, Senate Minority Leader Brad Hutto asked if a green card holder could open a restaurant.

Massey replied that such a person could do so but couldn't own the property.

"Why is that?" Hutto asked. "I thought the American Dream was kind of to own your own business?"

"Once they become a citizen, they



This is not legislation that is going to improve the quality of life for anybody in this state."

State Senator Dick Harpootlian of South Carolina

could do that," Massey said, adding: "They are still citizens of foreign adversaries."

Democratic Senator Dick Harpootlian opposed the bill and questioned the premise that a Chinese company's purchase of land equated to "establishing a nest of spies."

"This is a bumper sticker," Harpootlian said. "This is not legislation that is going to improve the quality of life for anybody in this state."

Another Democratic senator, Mike Fanning, expressed concern that it could hamstring rural counties with fewer options for outside investment.

An online comment by "Voltaire" said the measure isn't constitutional.

"It seems more and more these days America is heading down the path of restricting liberty," Voltaire wrote.

Another reader, David tried to remind people of the angst Americans experienced "when the Japanese were buying up not only land,

but also iconic properties".

Some readers expressed support for the bill but said it should apply to all foreign countries.

"And we should stop Canadian corporations from buying our land as well. They own huge chunks of housing developments and are a big reason housing is so expensive," a reader named Keith wrote.

Canada is the top country of origin for land ownership in the US, while China owns less than 1 percent.

Even though Texas appears to be the first state to propose bills of such a nature, South Carolina moved faster. The bill took less than a month from first reading to the Senate's approval.

Currently, similar bills have emerged in about a dozen states, mostly in the South.

In Texas, the first such bill was filed in November, and now there are 11 bills primarily targeting China, Russia, Iran and North Korea to restrict citizens and companies from those countries from owning real property and engaging in government contract, attending universities or operating social media platforms.

Other states with similar bills include Arizona, Georgia, New Jersey, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee and Virginia.

Earlier this year in Wyoming, two proposals restricting foreign land ownership were rejected by state legislators. The bills would ban ownership of more than an acre by people from China, Russia and countries the US government considers state sponsors of terrorism.

Agencies contributed to this story.

UN adopts resolution on climate obligations

By MINLU ZHANG
at the United Nations

The tiny Pacific island nation Vanuatu on Wednesday led a "core group" of 18 countries in successfully persuading the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution asking the world's top court to define the obligations of countries in the fight against climate change.

The General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution asking the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to issue an advisory opinion on the legal responsibilities of countries in combat of the climate crisis.

"If and when given, such an opinion would assist the General Assembly, the UN and member states to take the bolder and stronger climate action that our world so desperately needs," UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the General Assembly on Wednesday before the adoption.

The ICJ's opinion would not be binding but has legal authority and can influence future negotiations, which could make it easier to hold countries legally responsible for not addressing climate issues.

The resolution, put forward by Vanuatu and co-sponsored by more than 120 countries, passed by consensus, which means that none of the 193 member states needed a vote.

It could take about 18 months for the ICJ to issue an advisory opinion, with countries submitting input over the next year.

The advisory opinion could clarify financial obligations countries have on climate change, improving national climate plans that were presented in the Paris Agreement, and reinforcing local policies and legislation, Reuters reported.

The advisory opinion could be a crucial input for numerous climate-related legal cases that are currently pending worldwide, which are estimated to be more than 2,000, according to Reuters.

Such opinion "will have a powerful and positive impact on how we address climate change and protect present and future generations", Vanuatu Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau said Wednesday.

The effort started four years ago when a group of law students from Pacific Island nations suggested the ICJ an advisory opinion to advance climate justice.

Vanuatu, an island about 500 miles west of Fiji with about 300,000 habitants, is among the several small island countries that are severely impacted by the climate crisis, which is causing disruptions in their water and food supplies and leading to involuntary migration.

In early March, Vanuatu was hit by two category 4 hurricanes within 72 hours, causing widespread damage and flooding.

The resolution came at the same time when the Biden administration was auctioning off more than 73 million acres of water in the Gulf of Mexico to offshore oil and gas drilling.

The oil and gas drilling from this sale could emit about 21.2 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, according to an environmental analysis by the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

The Biden administration recently just approved a massive, decades-long Willow oil drilling project in Alaska.

The area where the project is planned holds up to 600 million barrels of oil, which will lead to the release of 9.2 million metric tons of carbon pollution annually, equivalent to the emissions of 2 million gasoline-fueled cars on the road.

The project is one of the largest "carbon bombs" on US soil, according to The Guardian.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Nashville school didn't have safety officers

By BELINDA ROBINSON
in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

In the wake of the deadly mass shooting at the private Covenant School in Nashville, Tennessee, it has emerged that the school didn't have a school safety resource officer on-site who could have acted as front-line defense.

Audrey Elizabeth Hale, 28, a former student at the school, was able to get inside by shooting through a glass door. Hale was armed with two assault style rifles and a pistol.

Police were on scene within 14 minutes after receiving the first emergency 911 calls at 10:13 am, but by that time, Hale had shot and killed six people — three children and three adults — before being shot and killed by police minutes later on the school's second floor.

There are approximately 25,000 school resource officers (SROs) in the country. Covenant, which has about 200 students from preschool through sixth grade, didn't have any.

In the US, there are 128,961 public



As a nation, we cannot afford to compromise on school safety, especially in the wake of recent events."

New York City Council Member Robert Holden

and private K-12 schools, according to 2019-20 data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Tennessee laws requiring schools to develop and submit safety plans don't apply to private schools, according to the state Education Department.

An executive order last year by Republican Governor Bill Lee on school safety measures directed the state to conduct a report on the use of armed guards in nonpublic schools and assess their need for active-shooter training, according

to The Associated Press.

Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, has trained school-based law enforcement officers, school administrators and school security and safety professionals to protect schools and their students, faculty and staff since 1991.

Canady told WVTM 13 news that since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020, many schools have chosen not to have a school resource officer. Those that exist are employed by local police departments but are more often placed in public schools rather than private schools.

He told China Daily: "We ask them [SROs] to have a law enforcement role. We've been training officers to work in schools for 31 years, and the relationship-building is number one. When we have those relationships, we have the opportunity for information-sharing that can help us to head off acts of violence before it ever even occurs."

Across the US, security in private schools varies. In some states, private schools can get access to

federal grants and other aid to hire security staff. Many invest heavily in security personnel; others don't, say security experts.

Additionally, red flag laws that exist in 18 other states and the District of Columbia aren't present in Tennessee. The laws act as an emergency order that temporarily prevent a person from obtaining a gun if their family or friends successfully petition a court to say they are a threat.

Hale was under medical supervision for an "emotional disorder".

"The parents felt [Hale] should not own weapons," Nashville Police Chief John Drake said at a media briefing.

In New York City, the nation's largest public school district, figures from the Independent Budget Office (IBO) show that the number of school safety officers has fallen 25 percent from pre-pandemic levels.

In February, there were 3,900 active school safety officers, but in February 2020 there were around 5,000. The drop comes despite a series of violent outbreaks in the city's schools this year.

New York Mayor Eric Adams, a former police officer, outlined in January's budget plans to cut hundreds more school safety roles, the New York Post reported. At least 832 positions have been lost since 2022, according to IBO.

City Hall has announced plans to increase the amount of money spent on school safety agents to at least \$367 million up to 2027. However, it is less than allocated in prior years, when \$427 million was spent in 2021, and \$395 million in 2019 and 2020.

New York City Council Member Robert Holden, a Democrat representing the borough of Queens, and a member of the public safety committee, told China Daily: "The proposed cuts to more school safety agent roles will have a negative impact on the city's schools. With fewer safety agents, it will become more challenging to maintain a safe and secure learning environment, which could impact student learning and well-being."

Holden added: "As a nation, we cannot afford to compromise on school safety, especially in the wake of recent events. Cutting the budget for school safety agents is the last thing we should do."

Agencies contributed to this story.

WORLD

Editor's note: Xinhua News Agency issued a report on Wednesday on the US' arbitrary detention at home and abroad. Following is the full text.

The United States' Arbitrary Detention at Home and Abroad: Truth and Facts

Introduction

I. Arbitrary detention is clearly defined in the international law

II. Arbitrary detention of immigrants in the United States constitutes serious human rights violations

III. Horrible practices of arbitrary detention by the United States around the world

IV. Reasons for the abuse of arbitrary detention by the United States

Conclusion

Introduction

Freedom from arbitrary detention is a fundamental individual right stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations, and an important provision in international human rights treaties. Though an important contributor in the drafting of the UDHR and one of the first countries to ratify international human rights treaties, the United States has carried out arbitrary detention in total disregard of its domestic legal provisions and international treaty obligations, causing serious physical and mental harm to people involved. This report is based on facts, and aims to expose the hypocrisy and double standards of the United States on arbitrary detention, and form an understanding that no country is now trampling on human rights more seriously than the United States.

I. Arbitrary detention is clearly defined in international law

• Arbitrary detention occurs when an individual is arrested and detained by a government without due process and without the legal protections of a fair trial, or when an individual is detained without any legal basis for deprivation of liberty. Arbitrary detention, in essence, is unlawful detention.

• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, clearly states that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." Article 9 states that "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile." On the basis of the UDHR, international human rights treaties including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the "Torture Convention") have been adopted. According to Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law." With the advancement of the international human rights cause, freedom from arbitrary detention has become a fundamental individual right and an important provision in international human rights treaties.

II. Arbitrary detention of immigrants in the United States constitutes serious human rights violations

• The US detention of immigrants at its domestic facilities is a serious violation of the "no use of torture" rule. Human rights treaties such as the "Torture Convention," customary international law and the laws of different countries all explicitly prohibit the use of torture. The prohibition of torture has also been recognized as a mandatory legal norm by US courts, international tribunals and the International Law Commission, with special reports issued to prevent related incidents. However, numerous cases have shown that the US immigration agencies have violated the law and conducted torture against detained immigrants.

• In 2018, the US Immigration Council and the US Immigration Lawyers Association filed a complaint with the oversight agencies of the US Department of Homeland Security, detailing DHS policy of family separation at the US border,

and its practices of forcing separated families, through extreme coercive means, to give up their legitimate asylum applications in exchange of resettlement, which has seriously violated the prohibition against torture and other abuses, and caused severe sufferings and torture to parents and children forcibly separated.

• In 2020, the US media revealed that women in custody at the Irwin County Detention Center in Georgia often suffered medical abuse and neglect, and that many received hysterectomies without proper informed consent or despite their strong resistance. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and relevant parties have expressed serious concerns on this issue. The UN human rights authority expressed strong condemnation and demanded that the US make an explanation and take corrective actions in accordance with its treaty obligations.

• The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has explicitly recognized the conditions that migrants are subjected to while detained in the US as degrading. ICE regularly places migrants in local jails and prisons. Even when migrants are placed into separate immigration detention centers, they still suffer various kinds of physical abuse, including overcrowding, lack of adequate visitation hours, insufficient ventilation, poor food, inadequate water, unclean quarters, malfunctioning toilets, and verbal and physical abuse.

• There are no specific regulations in the US on how long immigrants should be detained, so the length of detention is decided by the place of detention and economic factors. Some even become indefinite. With limited access to information, the detained immigrants are unable to fight for their legitimate rights. The Center for Victims of Torture notes that indefinite detention has damaging effects on the immune, cardiovascular and central nervous systems, and would cause harmful psychological effects including severe and chronic anxiety and dread, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and suicide.

• In March 2022, the Associated Press and CBS News exposed a border detention center for unaccompanied children in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas as disorganized and overcrowded, with a high risk of COVID-19 infection. While US federal law requires that minors should not be held in border detention longer than 72 hours, over 2,000 children have been detained in that facility for more than three days, 39 of them over 15 days. In February 2022 alone, more than 9,400 unaccompanied child immigrants were detained by US border law enforcement and some 4,000 of them were held in border custody for more than 72 hours.

III. Horrible practices of arbitrary detention by the United States around the world

• According to BBC reports, as early as in June 2005, the United Nations had been informed that the US had secretly detained terrorist suspects on its warships. In 2008, the human rights group Reprieve disclosed that the US had been using "prison boats" to hold terrorist suspects since the Clinton administration. As many as 17 warships may have been used as "floating prisons" by the US from 2001 to 2008.

• In 2001, The Washington Post revealed that five inmates were detained on the US amphibious assault ship Peleliu, including an American named John Walker. To reduce his sentence, Walker signed a plea deal that includes a "gag order" not to talk about his torture in custody, the Guardian reported. A US Department of Defense spokesman denied any detention measures on its warships. However, a prisoner released from Guantanamo told his probation officer that one of his fellow inmates was closed off in the bottom of a US warship with about 50 others before coming to Guantanamo, and was beaten even more severely than in Guantanamo.



Children stand outside a pod in the Donna Department of Homeland Security holding facility, the main detention center for unaccompanied children, in the Rio Grande Valley in Donna, Texas, on March 30, 2021. DARIO LOPEZ-MILLS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

• In August 2014, The Atlantic published an article "America's Floating Prison," disclosing how the US has been using naval vessels as "floating prisons" at sea to hold and interrogate suspects. Ahmed Abu Khattala, identified by the US as the suspect in the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was imprisoned aboard the USS New York and questioned by interrogators en route to the US, before he was formally arrested and transferred to the US District Court in Washington.

• In 2017, The New York Times revealed in "Coast Guard's 'Floating Guantanamo'" that prisoners recalled being shackled aboard with more than 20 people in a very crowded space. They got very little to eat and had to take from the trash their guards' unfinished meals. The sanitary conditions were quite poor. Some even asked the guard: "Just shoot me and kill me, because I cannot take this anymore."

• The US has set up numerous "black jails" in countries including Cuba, Afghanistan and Iraq, establishing a global network of secret prisons. A "Cost of War" report published in early 2022 by the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs at Brown University reveals that after the 9/11 attacks, at least 54 countries and regions have participated in the US black sites network, which has detained hundreds of thousands of people, including Muslims, women and minors. Under the excuse of the so-called "War on Terror," the US has set up black sites in many other countries, covertly detained alleged terrorist suspects, and extracted confessions with torture and other ill-treatment — all of which are typical examples of its wanton destruction of the rule of law and violation of human rights.

• In 2001, the US decided to set up a prison at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base to hold suspects captured by the US military in its global anti-terrorism operations after the 9/11 attacks. The US chose this location because of the sovereignty of the Guantanamo Bay belonging to Cuba, this place is legally not US territory; therefore the US could deny human rights to the detainees there and evade charges of human rights abuses from the international community.

• In January 2002, the first 20 detainees were held outdoors in wire mesh cages immediately upon arrival at Guantanamo Bay. In the 20 years afterward, roughly 780 people have been held at Guantanamo. Scandals of arbitrary detention and torture there continued to come to light. Moazzam Begg, a British Pakistani held there for two years, told the media about the painful experience of torture - hogtying, punching, kicking, and waterboarding - that

himself and other detainees had gone through. He said that the most vicious torture in the world is to be detained without knowing what crime has been committed. Without any charge or trial, one's personal freedom is gravely compromised.

• In March 2003, Pakistani prisoner Majid Khan, accused of having links to al-Qaida, was tortured at Guantanamo. After trial, the military jurors on this case wrote a joint letter condemning the US government's abuse of prisoners. According to the letter, Majid Khan was held without charges for nine years and was not allowed to see a lawyer for the first four and a half years. This is in complete disregard of the fundamental ideas on which the Constitution is based and an affront to American values and concept of justice. Mr. Khan was subjected to physical and psychological abuse well beyond approved enhanced interrogation techniques. In October 2021, Majid Khan described for the first time in public the torture, which included repeated beatings, waterboarding, forced enemas, sexual assault, and prolonged sleep deprivation. During the waterboarding, his head was dunked in water until he was almost suffocated.

• The Bagram prison, located 40 kilometers north of the Afghan capital, Kabul, held thousands of prisoners at one point. The prison has been dubbed Afghanistan's "Guantanamo Bay" because of revelations of abuse at the facility. In December 2002, two Afghan prisoners were tortured to death by US troops within a week. In January 2012, the Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution of Afghanistan made public a report about beatings and other mistreatment of detainees at Bagram prison. In February 2012, there was the Quran burning scandal by US soldiers at Bagram prison. Although the US troops in Afghanistan officially handed over the Bagram prison to the Afghan government in March 2013, the US military remains the actual controller of the prison.

• In an interview in 2021, Abdul Qadir Hijran, former Bagram prisoner, said in an interview that "I can't explain the torture and ill-treatment they applied to me, but the atrocities they committed would haunt me for years. Thirty-four inmates were kept in a cage-like room where they used to live without blankets and mattresses. The detainees were beaten up, tortured and insulted. It was extremely miserable that some detainees had eaten razor to end their lives given the inhuman treatment of the American soldiers."

• Qazim Azari, a journalist of the Iraqi newspaper Justice, pointed out that the US military willfully

detained innocent people, with torture scandals taking place at Abu Ghraib prison and Buea prison in Iraq. A large number of innocent Iraqis illegally detained were subjected to inhuman physical and mental torture.

• Facing the frequent exposure of serious human rights violations at US "black sites" overseas, the US government, instead of paying real attention to and stopping all of this, has continued to cover up and deny its crimes. No US official has been held accountable for developing, authorizing or carrying out covert arrest and torture programs. In December 2002, then US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld approved the use of a range of interrogation techniques at Guantanamo, including sensory deprivation, isolation and the use of vicious dogs. On 30 November 2004, The New York Times published a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) leaked by the US government which said that some acts at Guantanamo amounted to torture, and the ICRC's entry into the prison for investigation is conditional on its findings not being revealed. On 16 February 2006, the United Nations released its report on Guantanamo, calling on the US to either bring the detainees to trial or release them immediately. The US rejected the recommendation made by the UN report to shut down the prison. In 2021, eight UN human rights experts and 111 NGOs signed a joint letter which revealed that the US government had been treating communities of color from the perspective of security threats since 9/11. Guantanamo continues to amplify prejudice and hatred against Muslims, fueling racial division and antagonism in American society.

• In November 2002, Gul Rahman, held at Bagram prison in Afghanistan, died of coldness and torture, according to the "Cost of War" project findings. Four months later, the officer in charge of the interrogation was awarded a CIA commendation and US\$2,500 in cash awards. Several other staff members involved in the torture were given promotions and bonuses. In 2004, hundreds of prisoner abuse photos at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq were disclosed by the US media. But the US military personnel, senior government officials and private military contractors involved have been spared trial. Only some low-level US soldiers went through military trials and got convicted.

• In 2005, CIA officers intentionally destroyed 92 videotapes containing direct evidence of torture. But the US Department of Justice has so far refused to bring charges against those involved. In 2020, the ICC's chief prosecutor said there was evi-

dence that nearly 100 Afghan prisoners had been tortured, abused and even sexually assaulted during interrogations, and that the US military and the CIA may have committed war crimes for abusing prisoners in Afghanistan. However, this only made the US government impose economic sanctions and entry restrictions on the ICC chief prosecutor and other officials. In response to the UN Committee Against Torture's report on the abuse of torture at the CIA's overseas "black sites," the US government submitted a report in September 2021 claiming that based on confidentiality, the US cannot disclose information to other countries about detainees involved in the CIA activities.

IV. Reasons for the Abuse of Arbitrary Detention by the United States

The United States has a long history of arbitrary detention and disregard of human rights both at home and abroad, reflecting a deep-seated political culture of racism and violence.

• In recent years, racial conflicts have once again become one of the principal problems in American politics and society. One reason is that racism has been a chronic problem of the US since its founding. The cultural superiority and dominant position of the white people have led to a high degree of political, economic and cultural inequality among racial groups in the US. Another reason is that globalization and major demographic changes in the US have in recent years caused increasing grudges among the white Americans, the lower-middle class in particular, against immigrants and ethnic minorities, aggravating the problem of racism in the US.

• The rise of white supremacy in the US has exacerbated racial conflicts. Recent years have witnessed large-scale minority protests represented by the Black Lives Matter Movement and frequent refugee crises in border areas. Race-based arbitrary detention tramples on the basic human rights of ethnic minorities and foreign immigrants and runs counter to the human rights principles long proclaimed by the US, such as "all men are created equal." It will not help resolve the problem of illegal immigration. Rather, it further tears apart American society, creating social wounds that are difficult to heal. Democracy and human rights in the US are not enjoyed by all, but only by some. Tolerance and pluralism of American society are conditioned on the absolute dominance of the white people.

• The fact that the US has arbitrarily detained illegal immigrants at home and set up a large number of "black sites" abroad to create cases of arbitrary detention reflects its deep-seated hegemonic and unilateralist thinking and violent political culture. As long as the embedded racism remains, there will be no true integration and equality in the American society. As long as hegemonism and power politics persist, the US will keep resorting to violent means in resolving issues across the world, and the "black sites" and arbitrary detention will continue to exist.

Conclusion

The fact that the United States has carried out arbitrary detention at home and abroad has laid bare its hypocrisy and double standards with regard to human rights. The US groundlessly accuses others of arbitrary detention, while at the same time, however, does not mention a word about the torture and maltreatment common at its own prisons. Arbitrarily throwing people into its "black sites" around the world without trial has become a hallmark of the US trampling on the rule of law and infringing on human rights. The US should face up to and reflect upon its own serious human rights violations, stop politicizing human rights issues, and stop undermining the human rights of people of other countries.

XINHUA

BUSINESS

JOIN THE CONVERSATION; FOLLOW US ON TWITTER • CHINA DAILY

THE BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA

Way to development is tough, says panel

By YANG HAN in Boao, Hainan
kelly@chinadailyapac.com

New energy, "new infrastructure" and industry will be key to the pursuit of high-quality development, but the way forward can be challenging, a panel of experts said during a discussion at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 on Wednesday.

"It is generally accepted that high-quality development ... will require green, low carbon energy, integrated development modes of infrastructure, and the development of a variety of new industries based on digital technologies," said Danilo Turk, a member of the BFA Council of Advisors and former president of Slovenia.

Despite the already existing complexity, Turk said geopolitical confrontation, nationalism and other issues can make it even more complicated and difficult to carry out the implementation of innovation.

Turk was speaking in a panel discussion on "New Energy, New Infrastructure, New Industry" at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 in Boao, a coastal town in China's island province of Hainan.

Song Hailiang, chairman of China Energy Engineering Group Co, said new energy is the foundation upon which "new infrastructure" and industry can be developed.

Speaking on the advancements in hydrogen technology, Song said there is a huge potential in the storage and application of this new energy as it has been applied in a wide range of scenarios thanks to its lower cost.

Global hydrogen demand reached 94 million tons in 2021, exceeding the previous annual high of 91 million tons in 2019, according to the International Energy Agency.

As electricity accounts for 60-70 percent of the total cost of a data center, the rapid development of artificial intelligence has resulted in rising demand for computing and energy, said Liu Yunjie, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

New network structures and technologies will be critical to support for digitalization of the energy system, said Liu, who is also director of Purple Mountain Laboratories, a key innovation platform in networking and communications.

Lou Qiliang, general manager of China's leading train maker CRRC Group, said the green transformation has brought huge opportunities and the company is now working to further explore the wind power market.

In order to make new energy more accessible, three issues need to be addressed: high-end technologies, industry clustering and applications, said Zhang Chuanwei, chairman of Mingyang Smart Energy Group.

Developing renewable energy requires a lot of investment and infrastructure, said Chimed Khurelbaatar, deputy prime minister and minister of economy and development of Mongolia, noting achieving zero carbon emissions is a huge challenge for the country. Mongolia, he said, would welcome investors from China.

Though Pakistan accounts for less than 1 percent of global carbon emissions, the catastrophic floods in 2022 caused a loss of more than \$30 billion, with 33 million people, or one in seven, being affected, said Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's minister for planning, development and special initiatives. "Climate change is a reality. If it has hit Pakistan last year, it can hit anyone anywhere tomorrow."

Financial innovation a cornerstone in nation's modernization

By LIU YIFAN in Boao, Hainan
evanliu@chinadailyhk.com

Innovation in the financial sector serves as a cornerstone in promoting China's modernization as there is a growing need for wealth management and fundraising for the technology sector, said Wu Xiaohui, former vice-president of the Renmin University of China and dean of the China Capital Market Research Institute.

Wu made the remarks on Wednesday during an interview at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023, a China-led equivalent of the World Economic Forum held every year in Davos, Switzerland.

"As China entered a stage of modern financial development, demand among residents for wealth management has been rising significantly. This demand goes beyond simply depositing money," Wu said.

"It's also crucial for the country to drive industrial upgrades and iterations in its pursuit of modernization, which requires accelerated efforts in building a more diversified financial landscape to meet high-tech companies' needs."

In China's vision of modernization, the country aims to build a great modern socialist country by the middle of this century, making it imperative to secure sustainable

economic growth through technological innovations and advance law-based governance in all aspects.

"Financing for the technology sector is essential because, without industrial upgrades and technological progress, it would be difficult for traditional industries to bring China into the era of modernization by hinging on resource-based enterprises," he said.

Last month, China's financial market brightened its appeal to investors across the globe through reforms to render a more market-oriented and rule-based environment.

On Feb 17, the country rolled out its across-the-board registration-based IPO system with relevant rules coming into effect, according to the China Securities Regulatory Commission.

The reform builds on rules adopted by the Shanghai Stock Exchange's sci-tech innovation board or the STAR Market in 2019, the ChiNext board of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange in 2020 and the Beijing Stock Exchange in 2021 to shorten review periods and ease domestic listings.

Hailing the reform as a major milestone in the history of China's capital market, Wu said it is likely to enhance the market's inclusiveness, allowing tech startups easier access to the market.

about 10,300 such vehicles were sold in China, according to the China Machinery Industry Federation.

PICC reports higher 2022 top, bottom lines
People's Insurance Company Group of China, the nation's leading insurer,



Justin Yifu Lin (center), dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University, speaks at the Boao Forum for Asia in Boao, Hainan province, on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Forum stresses new growth opportunities

Panelists confident emerging fields will brighten long-term prospects

By OUYANG SHIJIA in Boao, Hainan
ouyangshijia@chinadaily.com.cn

While the global outlook is clouded by rising downward pressures and a more challenging environment, the world is also embracing new growth opportunities ahead from fields such as the digital economy and intelligent, green transformation, officials and experts said on Wednesday.

Zhao Chenxin, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that global growth lacks momentum and downward pressure is rising, warning of uncertainties related to major Western economies' capability to control inflation, the fragile financial system, the anti-globalization trend, food security and energy safety.

Zhao also said he is still optimistic, however, about long-term global prospects as the new round of technological and industrial advances, economic globalization

trends and the intelligent and green transformation drive will offer new opportunities, create favorable conditions and inject new impetus into the growth process.

Zhao said during the ongoing Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 that China will work with other economies to make greater contributions to global economic recovery.

Looking ahead, he called for global efforts to deal with global challenges, including creating more channels for countries to communicate and forge a consensus.

Despite pressures and challenges ahead, China will maintain stability and its economic growth will continue, said Justin Yifu Lin, dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University.

He said that as China grows into a larger market, it will also benefit the rest of the world.

On the recent banking stress

seen in the United States and Europe, and the fragility of the global financial system, Lu Lei, deputy administrator of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, said there are still plenty of tools to deal with such financial issues.

Zhu Min, vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, highlighted the importance of financial stability, saying it is unlikely that there will be a new round of interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve in the near term.

Citing China's stable prices, Ning Jizhe, former deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said China's economic recovery will not push up global inflation. Instead, China will export high-quality products at low prices to the rest of the world, he said.

Looking ahead, Ning voiced confidence in the long-term global economic prospects, saying it is of great importance for countries to adhere to the course of globalization and promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation.

China's tech firms, govt require more cooperation

By CHENG YU in Boao, Hainan
chengyu@chinadaily.com.cn

More joint efforts are needed from the Chinese government and tech companies to develop independent large model artificial intelligence platform, promote data flow and boost computing power so as to gain a lead in global tech competition amid the ChatGPT frenzy, said leading tech company executives and industry experts at the ongoing Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 on Wednesday.

"China needs to speed up its own large model AI construction. As a private company, we urgently need the government to jointly develop such an independent and controllable base platform that integrates AI software and hardware," said Du Lan, senior vice-president of Chinese tech firm iFlytek.

"Many of the AI and data resources are relatively fragmented. We expect the government to take a lead in building some computing power platforms," she said.

Shen Dou, executive vice-presi-

dent of Baidu Inc, said that insufficient data flow is also a problem restricting the development of tech companies and it is now relatively hard to drive the free flow of data among companies.

Shen said: "Also, now almost all tech firms are investing in ChatGPT. But what if one day local companies, especially smaller businesses, cannot buy chips?"

Baidu recently launched its own Ernie Bot, similar to ChatGPT.

They made the comments as a large group of Chinese tech companies are jumping on the ChatGPT bandwagon amid opportunities brought by the rapid development of China's digital economy.

A white paper released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, a government think tank, showed that the market scale of China's digital economy reached 50 trillion yuan (\$7.2 trillion) last year, up 10 percent year-on-year.

Zhu Min, vice-chairman of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said in an inter-



Participants discuss how to promote the digital economy at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023 on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

view with China Daily that driving the integration of the digital economy and the manufacturing sector is crucial for China's economic recovery this year.

Amid global economic uncertainties, Zhu said that a 5 percent growth target is "prudent and sustainable".

To help achieve the goal, China needs to stabilize its property market, improve the revival of consumption and greatly boost the quality of manufacturing, he said.

"To improve manufacturing quality, one important thing is to integrate the digital economy, including AI, into the development of the manufacturing sector," Zhu said, adding

PBOC head: CO2 goals need proper incentives

By OUYANG SHIJIA in Boao, Hainan

China is taking solid steps to promote green and low-carbon development as it embarks on a path toward achieving its dual carbon goals, officials said on Wednesday.

"Reaching a peak in carbon dioxide emissions and achieving carbon neutrality needs 'carrots and sticks,'" Yi Gang, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said at the ongoing Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2023.

While high carbon prices and carbon taxes will serve as the sticks, the central bank's supportive tools, such as providing commercial banks with re-lending loans with low-interest rates, are carrots in the incentive mechanism, Yi said.

He said the PBOC has introduced two types of tools to promote carbon reductions including support for technologies in fields like clean energies, energy conservation, environmental protection and carbon reductions as well as support for the clean use of coal.

Since the introduction of the two tools in 2021, the central bank has lent more than 300 billion yuan (\$44 billion) via re-lending tools, which has helped banks extend 600 billion yuan in loans to related green projects. And that has helped cut carbon emissions by about 100 million metric tons last year.

Currently, China's outstanding green loans stand at over 22 trillion yuan, accounting for about 10 percent of China's total loan balance. And the country's green bonds have reached more than 2.5 trillion yuan, Yi said.

Xuan Changneng, deputy governor of the PBOC, highlighted the importance of developing financial tools for the green and low-carbon transformation of high-emitting industries, saying it will bring forward and promote the implementation of relevant standards.

More efforts will also be made to improve the arrangement of carbon accounting and the disclosure of environmental information, and enrich the offering of financial tools for promoting the low-carbon transformation of high-emitting sectors, Xuan said.

that the level of digitalization in the sector is far from sufficient.

At the forum on Wednesday, a group of industry experts also called for more global efforts in cooperation in the tech and digital economy sectors.

Carl Fey, a professor at BI Norwegian Business School in Norway, said: "Chinese companies are more vibrant in development strategies and technological environment while the United States is better at applying technologies into more areas. The trend of cooperation in recent years has been curbed. We firmly believe that globalization will give birth to winners."

Briefly

China sees thriving fuel cell vehicle market

China has seen rapid development of the fuel cell vehicle market in recent years, with the compound annual growth rate of FCV sales reaching 32.3 percent during the 2016-22 period. During the period,

about 10,300 such vehicles were sold in China, according to the China Machinery Industry Federation.

PICC reports higher 2022 top, bottom lines
People's Insurance Company Group of China, the nation's leading insurer,

registered an increase in revenue and net profit for 2022. The operating revenue of the insurer was 625.8 billion yuan (\$91 billion) last year, up 6.9 percent year-on-year. Its net profit expanded 12.2 percent from a year ago to about 34.3 billion yuan, with total assets reaching 1.51 trillion yuan. The insurer continued to

optimize its business structure last year, with its investment in high-end manufacturing and green financing totaling 32.6 billion yuan and 65 billion yuan, respectively. In 2023, the insurer will scale up support for rural revitalization, technological innovation and people's livelihoods.

PBOC adds liquidity via reverse repos

China's central bank continued to inject funds into the financial system through open market operations on Wednesday. The People's Bank of China said on its website that it has conducted 200

billion yuan (\$29 billion) of seven-day reverse repos at an interest rate of 2 percent. The move is aimed at keeping liquidity stable in the banking system at the end of the current quarter, the PBOC said.

XINHUA - CHINA DAILY

BUSINESS

Investors have high hopes for progress in Sino-EU investment agreement

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

Chinese businesses operating in Europe are urging authorities in the European Union to quickly resume the approval process for the China-EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, or CAI, and expedite its signing, said a report released by China's top foreign trade and investment promotion agency on Wednesday.

The report — Business Environment of the European Union 2022/2023 — provided by the academy of the Beijing-based China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, said that a favorable business environment is a common expectation of foreign-invested businesses, and will create greater attraction for Chinese companies.

The study found that 28.7 percent of surveyed domestic companies will expand their investments in Europe if the EU relaxes its foreign investment review. About 40.87 percent will increase their investments in Europe if the CAI is signed and implemented.

“We look forward to the EU's continued improvement of the business environment, allowing foreign companies to play a greater role in promoting the EU's economic growth ...”

Zhao Ping, vice-dean of the CCPIT's academy

China and the EU reached an agreement in principle for the CAI in December 2020 after 35 rounds of talks spanning seven years. The European Commission described the CAI as “the most ambitious agreement that China has ever concluded with a third country” and one that “will ensure EU investors achieve better access to a fast-growing 1.4-billion consumer market and competition on a more level playing field in China.”

However, the European Parliament blocked the ratification of the CAI due to political reasons in March 2021.

Since 2022, the EU has implemented a number of policies to make it more difficult for foreign companies to invest, acquire and participate in public procurement within the EU. The deterioration

of the EU's business environment has affected normal production and operation activities of foreign companies in this market, said Zhao Ping, vice-dean of the CCPIT's academy.

According to the report, 33.04 percent of surveyed Chinese companies believe that the business environment in the EU has worsened, an increase of 5.86 percentage points from the previous year.

“We look forward to the EU's continued improvement of the business environment, allowing foreign companies to play a greater role in promoting the EU's economic growth and employment, as well as creating a broader space for China-EU cooperation,” said Zhao.

Bilateral trade between China and the EU grew 2.4 percent on a yearly basis to \$847.3 billion in 2022, with China and the EU being each other's second-largest trading partners. Chinese companies' investment flow to the EU reached \$7 billion and their investment stock in the EU reached \$102.9 billion, the CCPIT said.

The top five EU member states with the best business environment, according to surveyed enterprises, are Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, said the CCPIT report.

As the CAI is considered a balanced, high-level and win-win agreement that benefits China, the EU and the world, China has been keen to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation with the EU, maintain stable and unimpeded global industrial and supply chains, and create a sound environment for European companies to maintain robust growth in its market, said Zhang Yongjun, a researcher at the Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Echoing that sentiment, Jean-Pascal Tricoire, chairman and CEO of French multinational Schneider Electric SE, said that after operating in China for 36 years, the group is confident and firmly committed to its long-term development in China.

“We will continue to strengthen our ‘China hub’ strategy and enhance our advantages in innovation and collaboration, and better enable local partners and customers to accelerate their digitalization and decarbonization transformation,” he said.

In terms of boosting China's foreign trade, Wang Linjie, spokeswoman for the CCPIT, said the agency to date has received 519 applications, submitted by domestic organizers for overseas exhibitions this year. These trade fairs will be held in 47 countries, including the United States, Germany, France, Japan, Thailand and Brazil.



A Huawei robot is seen at the Mobile World Congress, the telecom industry's biggest annual gathering, in Barcelona, Spain, in February. AFP

Innovation push leads to EPO patent growth

More than 19,000 applications filed by Chinese inventors raise nation's profile in global rankings

By MA SI
masi@chinadaily.com.cn

China is likely to soon overtake Germany and Japan as the second-largest country filing patents with the European Patent Office, as Chinese companies continuously grow in innovation prowess and embrace the international intellectual property system for IP protection, a senior expert from the EPO said.

The forecast came as the EPO's latest data show that Chinese companies and inventors filed 19,041 patent applications at the office in 2022, trailing after Japan with 21,576 applications, Germany with 24,684 and the United States with 48,088.

Aidan Kendrick, chief business analyst at the EPO, said in an exclusive interview with China Daily that patent applications from Chinese companies at the EPO grew by 15.1 percent last year, marking the highest patent filing rate among the leading 20 patent-filing countries.

“The growth rate from China continues in the double digits and it will not be long before China overtakes Japan and Germany whose growth

rates are not at all on the same trajectory,” Kendrick said.

Kendrick went on to say that patent filings from China have more than doubled over the past five years and are nearly five times the level of a decade ago.

“It's been very dynamic and continuous. We see that it has become a measure of the innovation efforts in China and the use of the international IP system by Chinese companies,” Kendrick added.

15.1 percent

growth in patent applications from Chinese companies at the European Patent Office last year

Most inventions for which Chinese companies filed patent applications in 2022 came from digital communication, computer technology, electrical machinery, audio-visual technology and telecommunications.

The technical field with the steepest growth, however, was semiconductors with a year-on-year increase of 53.6 percent — 711 applications in 2022, up from 463 in 2021 — moving China into second position at the EPO after the US in this sector.

“The main Chinese player in semiconductors is BOE Technology Group, which is now just behind well-established names like Intel and Samsung. We can see that Chinese companies are making determined efforts to innovate in this area,” Kendrick said.

Huawei was, once again, the most

active patent applicant at the EPO last year, surging by 27.1 percent.

“When we looked at the figures, we were very struck by this development. Huawei is about 1,000 applications ahead of the second most active applicant. It's a remarkable effort made in 2022,” Kendrick said.

Last year, Huawei's research and development spending hit \$23.8 billion.

Yu Chengdong, CEO of Huawei's device business group, said as its profits grow in the coming years, the company will continue increasing investment in the exploration of frontier technologies.

The EPO said in 2022, nine Chinese companies were among the 50 largest patent applicants at the office — up from three in 2017 — confirming that the patent portfolio of technologies coming from China is broadening.

The top Chinese patent applicants at the EPO include Guangdong Oppo Mobile with 917, ZTE with 899, Tencent with 671 and BOE Technology Group with 598.

“We're seeing strong growth in electrical machinery and other industries. This is the area, which is covering the energy transition, that bolsters worldwide development. We also see Chinese companies that are active in battery technology. Chinese battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd, for instance, is coming in as a dynamic applicant,” Kendrick said.

CATL (No 48) and Vivo Mobile (No 35) were new entrants to the EPO's Top 50 patent applicants in 2022.

Pharma firm's R&D efforts bear fruit

By ZHOU WENTING
in Shanghai
zhouwenting@chinadaily.com.cn

Through the upgraded AstraZeneca's Global R&D China Center, which was unveiled in Shanghai in October 2021, a rising number of biotech innovations are being promoted to contribute to global development, said a senior executive of the United Kingdom-based pharmaceutical company.

The company will continue to increase its research and development capability and expand its collaboration with the ecosystem that is developing in China, said Susan Galbraith, executive vice-president and head of oncology R&D at AstraZeneca during her trip to China last week.



Susan Galbraith

“R&D efforts will address not only the cancers prevalent in Asia but those that are prevalent globally, such as breast, lung, prostate and colorectal cancers,” she said.

She raised the example of Savolitinib, a drug co-developed with leading Chinese company Hutchmed. The drug achieved approval in China in 2021 and AstraZeneca is developing its global approvals for both lung and gastric cancer drugs.

Another example is that the company has recently entered into cooperation with local biotech enterprise Harbour BioMed on the development and commercialization of an innovative immune cell engager that may benefit gastric cancer patients, she said.

The company's collaborations with its Chinese partners are beginning to bear fruit. Opportunities for results derived from China are rising, especially due to the country's accelerated developing ecosystem in biopharmaceutical development, allowing the market to become an important source of innovation, said Galbraith, who was scheduled to meet with biotech enterprises and academic and medical institutions during her visit.

“We are starting to see that the medicines developed in China are parallel with the speed of global R&D. In some areas, China's innovation is potentially leading. With evolution, that will continue to happen,” she said.

China's ecosystem of biotech and entrepreneurs is growing and so is its capability and experience, said Galbraith.

“A partnership with a company like AstraZeneca can help advance science and build capability. I hope we can help bring capability further in China through our partnerships,” she said.

He Jing, senior vice-president and head of AstraZeneca R&D China, said that the cancer types afflicting a large number of patients in China will continue to be a focus of the company's R&D efforts.

“We'll continue to explore immunotherapy, especially regarding ones with higher prevalence in China, for example, gastric, liver and cellular cancers,” she said.

Meanwhile, the company is building clinical programs at different stages, targeting gastric and liver cancers, He said.

“We forecast that AstraZeneca's R&D investment in China will triple that in 2020 by the end of this year and the R&D team will be expanded to 900,” said Galbraith.

She also mentioned that artificial intelligence has been used throughout new drug discoveries and the development process.

“In the future, I can see the new generative AI technology with a large language model, like ChatGPT for example, can also be used to help speed up many different aspects of how we work,” she said.

StanChart has big plans for biz in China

By JIANG XUEQING
jiangxueqing@chinadaily.com.cn

Standard Chartered will focus on the further opening-up of China's financial sector while the country, which is at the heart of its operation, will steadily expand institutionalized opening-up with regard to rules, regulations, management and standards, said Bill Winters, group chief executive of Standard Chartered PLC.

“As China's opening-up becomes increasingly more important and prevalent, we think it's a critical area for us to continue focusing on and it has worked well, especially being in the stage of institutionalized opening-up,” said Winters during his first visit to China since 2020 to attend the three-day China Development Forum, which wrapped up on Monday.

“Part of the reason that it's such a pleasure to be in Beijing is that our growth opportunities are very much aligned with China's strategic priorities,” he said.

Standard Chartered has been an active participant in cross-border payments and investments, foreign exchange and risk management, the

Belt & Road Initiative, and green and sustainable finance, which has been a key area of focus for the group, he said.

“For us, it has meant a substantial double-digit growth in China in each of the past three years despite the ups and downs of the global economy. We are investing very heavily to further promote our growth and China's institutionalized opening-up, and play our role as a connector between the different markets in which we operate,” he said.

Last year, Standard Chartered announced it would invest \$300 million in China-related business in the next three years.

“We've made very good progress so far. We received some new licenses, which will involve further investment,” Winters said.

In January, Standard Chartered Bank (Hong Kong) Ltd obtained regulatory approval to set up a wholly foreign-owned securities company in Beijing, which will further enhance the group's position in China's onshore capital markets.

“We invested heavily in the infrastructure that will support China's institutionalized opening-up, including cross-border payments, currency risk management and domestic payments to support cross-border business. We also con-

tinued to invest in our wealth management products and services,” Winters said.

In addition to a technology and operations center in Tianjin, the group set up another such center in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, with a target of hiring 1,000 people, to support its broader China business.

Currently, the country's further opening-up and the global expansion of Chinese companies are relying heavily on high-standard economic and trade agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, said Jerry Zhang, executive vice-chairman and CEO of Standard Chartered China.

“Our business related to the ASEAN trade corridor grew by more than 60 percent in 2022. Customer activities in South Asia and the Middle East have remained strong. In recent years, we have been constantly seeing Chinese customers in these regions and have deployed many Chinese-speaking employees,” Zhang said.

In addition, Standard Chartered is committed to making the internationalization of the renminbi a development strategy for the group, hoping to cooperate with its clients and China's central bank in their long-term strategic goals in this area.



The booth of Standard Chartered is seen during the fourth China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November 2021. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Regarding the Belt and Road Initiative, Standard Chartered completed more than 130 projects in the countries and regions involved last year and 40 percent of the projects met the environmental, social and governance standards of the United Nations.

Standard Chartered is committed to incorporating more green development concepts into BRI-related projects in the future, Zhang said.

She applauded the great strides China has made in further opening up its financial sector in recent years.

“In terms of market access, there

are now few barriers left, although we are still striving for business licenses in some specific areas,” Zhang said.

“I think it is worth anticipating changes based on the concept of differentiated regulations proposed by Chinese financial regulators. The balance sheets of foreign banks in China are relatively small and regulators hope that these banks can develop healthily and sustainably in the country. In this regard, it is probably necessary to have a bit of flexibility in certain aspects of regulation. This is something we are looking forward to,” she said.

BUSINESSFOCUS

Carpet company's focus floors competition

Quality meets global standards for Shandong firm, JV drives business

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
zhaoruihue@chinadaily.com.cn

In a carpet mill in Weihai, Shandong province, looms and other machines are working long hours to fill a lengthy list of orders, rolling out 4-meter-wide Axminster carpet in a variety of colors and patterns.

The mill is owned by Haima Group, which has 26 production lines manufacturing Axminster carpet, a 250-year-old British brand that calls itself the nation's "oldest, best known and most prestigious carpet designer and manufacturer".

Haima produced 3.61 million square meters of carpet in the past year, making it a top global Axminster carpet manufacturer.

Haima was recognized as a single-product champion in manufacturing by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology last year for its core competitiveness in producing carpet and its leading share in global markets.

Carpet produced by the company has been sold in more than 80 countries and regions, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan and South Korea. The company's carpet export volume in 2022 registered a year-on-year increase of 25 percent, according to the company.

Since the end of this year's Spring Festival holiday in January, the company said it has been working strenuously to meet rising demand for carpets, including upscale Axminster products for restaurants and hotels, polyethylene carpet squares mainly used in office buildings and carpet for cars.

Single-minded target

Liu Jianwei, chairman of Haima Group, said the company has been able to develop into a world-leading producer of carpet by remaining focused on one thing and striving to make that perfect. Since its start in 1958, the company has worked to develop only one product — carpet.

"During the past 65 years, we have stuck to strict principles on products we put on the market," he said.

"We won't manufacture products that don't amaze us or has quality that isn't superior to others in the market," he added.

Couristan, a US-based rug and carpet supplier founded 97 years ago that prides itself on its commitment to excellence, has entered into an agreement with Haima that will give the group's high-end carpet an even larger global share.



A worker checks a yarn production line in a factory of Haima Group in Weihai, Shandong province on March 9. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



An employee works on carpets for export in a workshop of Longfu Recycling Energy Sciencetech Co Ltd in Binzhou, Shandong province, on July 12, 2020. CHU BAORUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Couristan was looking around the world for partners that can produce quality carpet and rugs. The company conducted research in many countries and decided to work with us after learning about our techniques, equipment and development orientation," Liu said.

In 2005, the two companies formed Couristan China, a joint venture that has built one of the largest woven carpet and rug manufacturing facilities in the world.

"It was also in 2005 that we decided to develop and manufacture Axminster's high-end carpet to expand our global market," Liu said.

Before producing Axminster carpet, Haima sent groups of technicians to the US and Europe to learn advanced production techniques.

Wang Zhaoqi, former chairman of Haima, encouraged technicians to polish the production process repeatedly until they could produce carpet that met the world's top standards, the company said.

“We have strict requirements in producing quality carpet in order to make our products durable, soft, quiet underfoot, good for insulation and free of any undesirable odors.”

Liu Jianwei, chairman of Haima Group

"We have strict requirements in producing quality carpet in order to make our products durable, soft, quiet underfoot, good for insulation and free of any undesirable odors," Liu said.

"We select wool from around the world to ensure materials are the best," he said, adding that the wool used for Axminster carpet is imported.

It cost the company tens of millions of yuan worth of carpet before rolling out products that

met top international standards, he said.

"As long as the carpet had one aspect that couldn't meet international standards, we would scrap them and try again," Liu said.

A year later, Axminster carpet bearing the logo of Haima were sold in the US through the joint venture.

The total sales of Axminster carpet produced by Haima reached 2.6 million square meters in 2012, setting a world record, according to the Chinese Carpet Industry Association.

As it grew, Haima at one point considered whether to invest in other sectors, Liu recalled.

The company registered for a license to develop real estate in 2008. After getting the license, Wang, the former chairman, convened a board meeting.

"What is the goal of Haima Carpet?" Wang asked the board members at the meeting. The board members answered in unanimity that their goal is to be number one in the carpet sector.

Wang then asked what the goal was for Haima to develop real estate and board members fell silent. "If we don't have a goal, how can we succeed?" he said.

Since then, the company has continued to put all its efforts into developing its carpet business.

"We have been number one in Axminster carpet production and

sales for 10 years in a row," Liu said. "In domestic markets, our carpet is being used by 75 percent of five-star restaurants and hotels."

Innovative fervor

Haima has also been working with scientific research institutes and universities to develop more environmentally friendly carpet, officials said.

The company said it has spent over 70 million yuan (\$10.17 million) on research and development in the past three years, completing 360 innovations in its manufacturing technique that have made its carpet more comfortable and environmentally friendly.

Carpet squares made with polyethylene, also called PE — a material widely used in products including clear food wrap, bottles and shopping bags — is one of the new products the company has been producing in recent years.

The PE carpet squares, mainly used in office buildings, had been manufactured primarily in the US before Haima succeeded in developing its own production techniques after more than 500 experiments, Liu said.

"Domestic demand for PE carpet squares couldn't be fulfilled due to COVID-19, which affected transportation, so we started to study and develop the PE carpet in 2020," he said.

By working with universities and scientific research centers including Dalian University of Technology for nearly two years, the company finally mastered techniques for manufacturing PE carpet squares.

After conducting 400 experiments, the company was able to produce PE carpet squares up to international standards, Liu said, but the company wanted its products to be better, so it continued to upgrade its carpet to make it more comfortable.

"We worked to find a perfect point at which the carpet is not too hard nor too soft," he said.

Production started on the PE carpet squares in June 2022. Since then, the products have been used in several big buildings, Liu said.

"The PE carpet has no irritating odors and it can be recycled, making the product popular in the market," he said.

The company has been using automatic and smart production facilities to increase efficiency. Only two people are needed to operate a production line for Axminster carpet. The automatic machines have also saved yarn, Liu said.

Du Pingji, deputy general manager of Haima, expects greater demand for carpet with the economic recovery from the pandemic, especially with the robust recovery of tourism.

"Orders from home and abroad have risen during the past month," Du said.



Ride the wave of new energy vehicles.
Feel the joy of green transport.



AD

COMMENT

Editorials

Resolute response no overreaction to serious provocations of Tsai's US 'visits'

The more Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen declared that she has the "right" to "connect" the island with the world before departing for a 10-day trip to Central America from Taipei on Wednesday, the more it showed she knows she doesn't.

According to the released itinerary for her trip, she is making stopovers in New York and Los Angeles on either side of her visits to Guatemala and Belize. And while she will stay about one day in each of the two Central American countries, she will spend about a week in the United States. Which serves to expose the nature of her trip as a cover for her to seek more US support for her "pro-independence" cause.

She has previously made six such "stopovers" in the US since taking office in 2016, and each has invariably led to an escalation of tensions between Beijing and Washington and across the Taiwan Straits.

Taipei and Washington have always brazenly blamed this on Beijing's "overreaction", and some of the China hawks in Washington probably harbor the hope that they can provoke Beijing into using force against Taiwan, which will help them isolate Beijing from the world. Even if Beijing does not "overreact", Tsai's "stopovers" are still of use to them, as they continue the "past precedent", which serves as a salami-slicing tactic to hollow out the one-China principle and sow confusion over the Taiwan question.

Regional stability and development are the victims of Tsai's de facto "visits" to the US. The stopovers and US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's

scheduled meeting with Tsai in California, which was confirmed by the US side on Wednesday, are nothing but grave provocations. Beijing has every right to take "resolute countermeasures", as it pledged on Wednesday.

Tsai is more clear than anybody else that the US only regards the island as a pawn in its geopolitical game. That she still obsessively presses ahead with her "pro-independence" cause should drive home the message to Taiwan compatriots and her Western audiences that she does not take the island's interests and the well-being of its people into consideration. Otherwise, she would have expressed concern at US President Joe Biden's recent remarks that the US has a plan for the destruction of the island, and the Biden administration coercing Taiwan's leading technology companies to move the manufacturing of their next-generation products to the US.

In contrast, former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou has solemnly upheld the one-China principle during his ongoing homecoming visit to the mainland. The veteran Kuomintang member's call for the two sides of the Straits to strive for a rejuvenation of China offers a rational and responsible response to the Taiwan question, and puts into stark relief the efforts of Taipei and Washington to try and create the illusion that a war is imminent and unavoidable.

That being said, Tsai is not connecting the island with the world. She is making connections with those whose back she can scratch in the hope of sustaining a cause that is doomed to failure.

China's developing status no Schrödinger's cat

US lawmakers in the House of Representatives voted 415 to 0, with 19 abstentions, to strip China of its developing nation status. In passing the "PRC Is Not a Developing Country Act" on Monday, they once again succumbed to hubris and habit; proving the point that while anybody can become angry and rant about this or that, to be angry at the right thing, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right reason, and in the right way is not something that is within everyone's power. Certainly it is beyond the occupants of the House, although the conviction of their omniscience finds its match in their belief in their omnipotence.

House representatives introduced the bill on the grounds that China was benefiting from its developing nation status by receiving development assistance and loans from international organizations even though it is now the world's second-largest economy. This ignores the fact that China's per capita GDP remains below that of the developed countries.

Claiming that China is bolstering its presence in organizations and treaties while avoiding having to contribute its appropriate share to solve global problems with the excuse that it is a developing country, they are aggrieved at what they perceive to be "China gets to have its cake and eat it too".

Yet such indulgence is the gluttonous hallmark of the US. Having set the global rules to serve itself, now that it finds its share of the cake is no longer as large as it used to be, it is busy trying to rewrite them to

restore its privileged portion.

Those politicians talking nonsense about China on Capitol Hill are wasting their talents; a quantum physics lab would be a better venue for them to demonstrate their acumen. For in the narrative of these China hawks, China's developing country status is like Schrödinger's cat. When the US needs China's market via its entry into the World Trade Organization, China is a "developing country". When the US wants to impose more international duties on it and deprive it of the incentives enjoyed by developing countries, China becomes a "developed" one.

As Till Schöfer from the Free University of Berlin and Clara Weinhardt from Maastricht University pointed out in an article published in Foreign Affairs in November, "China has barely used the special rights provided to developing-country members in the Trade Facilitation Agreement" and "China also had to take on more extensive tariff cuts".

While politicizing and distorting international rules to serve the narrow interests of the US, American politicians also turn a blind eye to the fact that China is endeavoring to shoulder its international responsibilities. Perhaps the fact that it offers a supportive hand to the South rather than "a tribute" to the North has something to do with this.

If they want the world to believe they are acting with at least a modicum of sense, the House representatives should accept that it is not China, but they themselves, with their own reckless ways, that have compounded the US' pains beyond its rightful share.

Another sign Sino-Australian ties reviving

In another sign of improved Sino-Australian relations, Daniel Andrews, premier of Victoria state, is on a six-day visit to China that started on Monday, becoming the first of Australia's state leaders to visit the country since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Prior to his departure, Andrews said on Sunday that it was important to strengthen the state's relationship with China because it is Victoria's largest and most significant trading partner. The visit, his seventh to China since becoming premier in 2014, is about "sending the clearest message that we value this partnership". During the visit, Andrews is expected to discuss trade and cultural ties with Chinese officials, as well as the return of Chinese students to Victoria after the lifting of pandemic-induced border closures. Currently, 42,000 Chinese students are enrolled in schools across Victoria.

Victoria, under his leadership, has always been on good terms with China. The state signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative in 2019 to ensure increased participation of Chinese enterprises in Victoria's infrastructure program and wider market access for Victorian businesses in China, before the Scott Morrison government canceled the deal in 2021 on the grounds that it was inconsistent with Australia's foreign policy.

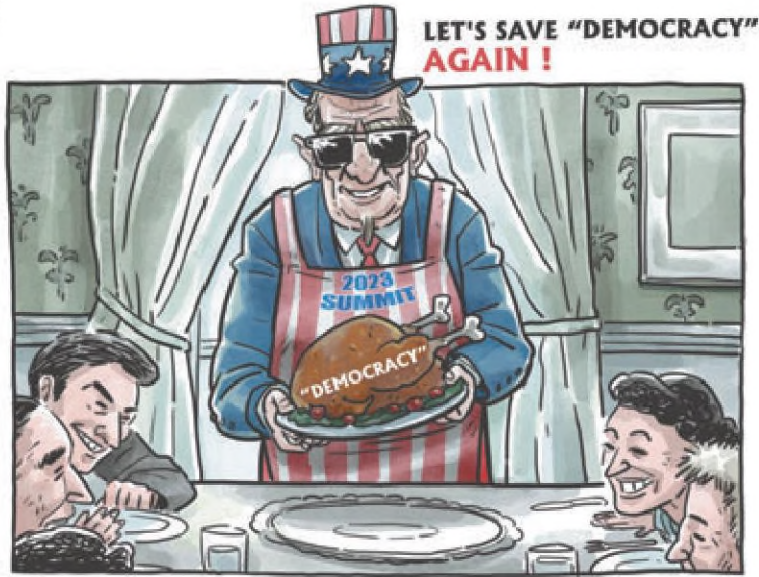
That Andrews said Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was supportive of his current China trip may serve to guarantee fruitful outcomes will be

yielded this time, which augurs well for the future of China-Australia relations.

The sense of optimism is being fueled by a diplomatic thaw that has emerged since Albanese took office in May last year, after years of tensions in bilateral ties as a result of former prime minister Morrison closely toeing Washington's anti-China line and taking a confrontational stance toward the country. Thanks to his government's anti-China strategy, Australia became the first country to ban Chinese telecommunication giant Huawei from the construction of 5G networks, and clashed with China on a wide range of issues such as trade, the South China Sea, human rights, and COVID-19. All this, in addition to the AUKUS alliance that it forged with the United States and the United Kingdom to counter China in the "Indo-Pacific" region, nearly pushed bilateral ties to the brink of collapse.

A stable and constructive Australia-China relationship is in the interests of both countries and the region as well, as observed by Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong during her "ice-breaking" visit to Beijing last December — also the first by an Australian top envoy since November 2018. Hopefully Canberra will strive to maintain the momentum of improved relations with China by working with Beijing to push the two countries' highly complementary trade relations, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges forward to deliver more significant benefits to both sides.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Clearing net of falsehoods key to business-friendly environment

In a recent news conference, the national cyberspace regulator said that a series of special operations will be launched to rectify and crack down on all kinds of false information targeting enterprises and entrepreneurs, private ones in particular, to protect their lawful rights and cleanse the online environment.

Many enterprises are often troubled by false information maliciously spread on the internet, such as rumors on their bosses having "run away" from the motherland or rumors on the private life of their female bosses, which not only infringes on the legitimate rights and interests of their bosses, but also damages their brand image and even directly affects their normal operation.

Therefore, the top cyberspace regulator said greater efforts will be made to crack down on various types of false and untrue information related to enterprises and entrepreneurs.

Both State-owned and private enterprises should accept public supervision and criticism if they violate laws and regulations. The cooking up of false information on the internet about enterprises and entrepreneurs sabotages normal information dissemination order and the online environment.

A good business environment requires not only good hardware such as transportation facilities and resource allocation, but also good software such as policies and measures and the rule of law. At the same time, a clean and healthy

cyberspace and public opinion atmosphere conducive to business operation and entrepreneurship is also needed.

Therefore, improving the online environment for business helps boost people's confidence and hope.

Enterprises are the main promoters of social innovation, and entrepreneurs the engine of social wealth creation. Only by fostering a sound business environment, including internet environment, and enabling enterprises and entrepreneurs, especially private ones, to feel at ease in their business operations and development, can we stimulate the vitality of innovation and creativity and keep the "giant ship" of the Chinese economy steering farther.

—THEPAPER.CN

Japanese aggression not forgotten

The foreign ministry of the Republic of Korea has protested at the Japanese government's approval of 149 primary school textbooks that make "improper claims", such as whitewashing the atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. They also claim that Japan had sovereignty over an island that is in dispute.

This is not the first time the Japanese government has approved such books. While protecting freedom of the press is good, Japanese textbooks should follow some basic principles, such as not defending an aggressive war. Being among the main countries to launch World

War II and the power that didn't surrender until the last minute, imperial Japan inflicted untold suffering upon its neighbors.

The atrocities committed during the Nanjing Massacre were such that even a diplomat from Germany, an ally of Japan, used the word "shame" to describe it.

However, as popular narratives are often dominated by the West, the world does not remember atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army as much as it remembers those committed in the Holocaust by the Nazis. Those have been recorded in history textbooks the world over and criticized. Their

defenders continue to face criminal charges in Germany and elsewhere. In contrast, the atrocities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army are known mostly to those at the receiving end, the people of China, the ROK and Southeast Asian nations.

The ROK's protest is a good move to remind the world that the atrocities committed by imperial Japan should never be forgotten. That's also where countries that suffered, such as China and the ROK, can work together to resist any effort by Japan to revive its military past and cover up its crimes.

—ZHANG ZHOUXIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Boarding schools facilitate learning in Tibet

Most herdsmen in the Tibet autonomous region live in sparsely populated areas, causing great difficulties for their children to commute between home and school on a daily basis.

As stipulated by the Compulsory Education Law, the government started offering optional and free boarding services at local schools to resolve this problem in the 1980s. That's why most schools in Tibet today are of a mixed model consisting of resident and non-resident students.

After about four decades of development, the management of the boarding services is professional and considerate, ensuring the safety and comfort of the students, who can visit home on the weekends, during the school holidays and on sick leave or due to other personal matters if necessary.

The government started providing free school buses for the resident students at the beginning and end of their semesters in 2011 so

that those living far from school, particularly those from low-income families, can enjoy safe and care-free journeys home and back to school.

The communication channels between the resident students and their families are always open when they are at school. Some schools also invite representatives of the parents to directly participate into the management of the boarding services as supervisors as well as a bridge between the students and other parents.

The schools in Tibet attach special significance to encouraging the students to learn the Tibetan language, culture and arts. They not only have courses on Tibetan language, opera and dance, *thangka*, a traditional Tibetan painting on cotton, silk applique, and other symbolic arts with distinct ethnic characteristics, but are also encouraged to explore innovations to inject new vitality into the traditional arts so that they can better

adapt to the fast-changing world today.

Since the boarding services were introduced in Tibetan schools, they have greatly facilitated the education of children at schooling age of all ethnic groups in the region, and contributed to the inheritance and development of the Tibetan culture and the protection of local lifestyle.

For most of its history, the illiteracy rate in Tibet was as high as 95 percent, which was exactly the proportion of serfs in Tibetan population at that time, as only the serf owners and those above in the social hierarchy were entitled to the limited education resources.

At present, the average length of schooling has increased to 13.1 years thanks to the founding of a modern education system in the region.

—CHENG DONGYA, PROFESSOR OF TIBET UNIVERSITY, AND BAI LIANG, PROFESSOR OF NORTHWEST NORMAL UNIVERSITY

CHINA DAILY WORLDWIDE

Contact us at:

China Daily
15 HuiXin Donglie Chaoyang District,
Beijing 100029
News: +86 (0)10 6491-8366
editor@chinadaily.com.cn
Advertisement: +86 (0)10 6491-8631
ads@chinadaily.com.cn
Subscription: +86-400-699-0203
subscription.chinadaily.com.cn
App: www.chinadaily.com.cn/mobile/daily.html

China Daily UK
90 Cannon St, London EC4N 6HA, UK
+44 (0) 207 398 8270
editor@chinadailyuk.com

China Daily Asia Pacific
China Daily Hong Kong
Unit 1818, Hing Wai Centre, 7 Tin Wan
Praya Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong
+852 2518 5111
editor@chinadailyhk.com
editor@chinadailyasia.com

China Daily USA
1500 Broadway, Suite 2800,
New York, NY 10036
+1 212 537 8888
editor@chinadailysusa.com

China Daily Africa
P.O. Box 27281-00100, Nairobi, Kenya
+254 (0)20 242 8589 (Nairobi)
editor@chinadailyafrica.com
enquiries@chinadailyafrica.com
subscription@chinadailyafrica.com

COMMENT

Ahmed M. Saeed

Economic growth: whence it came, where it is going

The recent history of economic growth can be divided into two phases: before and after the 2008 global financial crisis. Prior to 2008, the global economy experienced a period of sustained growth, a Goldilocks period including here in China but also in other developing countries and in the developed world.

The global financial crisis marked a sharp turning point in this process. Developed countries have struggled since then to sustain high levels of growth, and emerging markets have been growing more slowly.

During this time, a far more significant transformation has also taken place. Where we once assigned growth an exalted place at the altar of public policy priorities, it has now revealed itself to be an insufficient objective. China has said that meeting people's aspirations for a better life is the ultimate goal of the government. At the Asian Development Bank we now define our purpose not simply in terms of growth, but as building a prosperous, resilient, inclusive and sustainable Asia.

These new, more nuanced goals reflect the realization that growth alone or prosperity alone is no holy grail. In fact, growth can be damaging to the very social fabric from which it emanates if it is not equitably shared, if it is accomplished in a manner that imposes costs on others or on our planet, or if it is so fragile as to crumble in the face of unexpected challenges.

Nothing demonstrates this point more than the urgent, pressing challenge of climate change, which emerges directly from and threatens to upend much of the progress that came before it.

But where is economic growth headed? We appear to be at a fork in the road with respect to the future of growth. On the one hand, the odds stacked against accelerating growth appear formidable: high inflation and interest rates, trade and political fragmentation, a stalling, if not reversal, of the long-standing trend toward freer flow of capital. There are reasons to believe that the post-2008 period of difficult growth will continue and that a return to pre-2008 good times may not be around the corner.

But, on the other hand, there are also reasons for optimism. Human ingenuity and technology continue to surprise. Artificial intelligence, robotics, biotech, digitalization all have the potential to substantially increase productivity gains and economic growth.

An even stronger reason for possible optimism lies, in my opinion, in the developing world. Going forward, the world's population growth will take place entirely in developing countries. Therefore, despite it not being an easy exercise, massively increasing the flow of financing and capital both through public sector institutions and private markets, makes basic economic and financial sense.

As Larry Summers, an economist and former US Treasury secretary, said, the single thing about Earth that would most surprise an alien economist observing our planet is the lack of "large continuing flows from the aging, slowly growing global north to the much broader global south." The task of expanding the circle of human prosperity is still far from over.

No matter which path we take — the slow growth path or a high-quality growth path — it will be affected by the policy choices developing countries make, especially in the context of climate change and energy transition, and by the actions of those that have resolved to work with them, from the public sector to the private.

As the world's second-largest economy committed to promoting circular economy, and pursuing green development to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, China has the opportunity to play a key role in this journey both at home and abroad, and the ADB is committed to being its partner in this process.

Developing countries, especially upper middle-income countries such as China, can further accelerate the path to a more sustainable growth model. First, we need to adopt an approach that reflects that "decarbonization is development". Increasing investment in this sector can yield commercial benefits. We need to carefully map out where the specific opportunities lie.

Second, we also need to establish a new social contract between public and private sectors in pursuit of those opportunities, including by leveraging fiscal and monetary policy and using available lev-



ers to accelerate the flow of finance in order to incentivize technology transformation and deployment at scale.

Third, it is essential that we identify key choke points in the transition process and find ways to address such challenges. For organizations like the ADB, the challenge of helping countries' transition to a new growth model means we need to be ready to support governments in the developing world in this process, including by revisiting certain historic assumptions, for example, about the optimal relationship between the public and private sectors during periods of structural transformation.

And fourth, we have to find new ways and partnerships to catalyze the flow of private capital into developing countries.

We at the ADB are still in the early phases of this journey. We have substantially raised our total climate finance ambition to \$100 billion by 2030. We are working with governments on decarbonization pathways to come up with new development ideas, turn those ideas into

policies, and the policies into action. And we are launching experimental new partnership platforms, philanthropic vehicles, blended finance tools and new forms of transition finance, and working with a broader range of partners than ever before.

This journey demands the best from all of us — the public sector, the private sector, finance and philanthropy. The most successful organizations will always be those that solve significant societal problems. We are all in this together. Whether we transition to new, more robust models of growth, whether we are able to accelerate the process of energy transition, it will take a collective effort. Working together for common cause we can replenish our store of public trust and social capital, the public good that lies behind other public goods.

The author is vice-president for East Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank.

The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Pan Hsi-tang

Ma's visit has deeper significance for cross-Straits ties

Former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou's visit to the Chinese mainland from March 27 to April 7 is the first by a former leader of the island to the mainland since 1949. Although the primary purpose of Ma's visit is to pay his respects to his ancestors on Qingming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Day) and promote youth exchanges across the Taiwan Straits, it will also have a significant impact on overall cross-Straits ties.

Given the current freeze in cross-Straits relations, Ma's potential meetings with high-ranking officials from the mainland could be seen as a positive step toward promoting exchanges and restoring normalcy across the Straits. The importance of Ma's visit should not be underestimated.

The Ma Ying-jeou Foundation has said his visit has two themes: "family affair" and "youth." First, Ma's visit to his ancestral home in Hunan province with family members highlights the powerful bond of kinship. In fact, most people in Taiwan can trace their roots back to the mainland, and the good thing is that Taiwan compatriots have preserved Chinese culture and traditions, including festivals such as Spring Festival, Qingming Festival, Dragon Boat Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival.

The different religions and customs followed by Taiwan compatriots, as well as the traditional values of faith, filial piety, loyalty and righteousness all embody the beauty of Chinese culture. Both sides of the Straits share the same roots, language and culture. We are one family.

Ma often says restoring peace and promoting prosperity should start with the younger generation.

Second, Ma's itinerary includes multiple dialogues between students from the two sides of the Straits, which will help enhance mutual understanding and promote friendship among the next generation.

Ma often says restoring peace and promoting prosperity should start with the younger generation.

During his administration, Ma opened up Taiwan to mainland students, ushering in a new era of youth exchanges across the Straits. But in February 2020, the Tsai Ing-wen administration banned mainland students from studying in Taiwan using the pandemic as a pretext, dealing another blow to cross-Straits ties.

The Ma Ying-jeou Foundation has been focusing on cultivating young students, and through his visit to the mainland, Ma sends a signal that he hopes to ensure students from both sides of the Straits exchange their ideas and experiences, instead of being hostile toward each other.

Since Ma is visiting the mainland to pay his respects to his ancestors at a time of heightened tensions across the Straits, his visit brings a silver lining. The visit shows that only by acknowledging the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China can positive cross-Straits dialogue be restored.

Ma's visit can have a calming effect on cross-Straits ties. Former Kuomintang chief Lien Chan's "breaking the ice, pursuing peace" visit in 2005, and Ma's acknowledgement of the 1992 Consensus after taking office not only helped improve cross-Straits relations but also brought many benefits to Taiwan residents.

But after taking office in May 2016, Tsai refused to recognize the 1992 Consensus, pushing cross-Straits relations to the brink of military conflict. Ma has taken the first step toward restoring peace across the Straits. If more Taiwan compatriots were to follow in the footsteps of Lien and Ma to promote cross-Straits exchanges, they can promote peace across the Straits and bring significant benefits for the island.

Ma's visit to the mainland around Qingming Festival to pay his respects to his ancestors shows he has not forgotten his roots and identifies with the Chinese nation, and shares historical perspectives, and family and cultural ties with people on the mainland.

During his term in office, Ma promoted consultations and people-to-people exchanges between the mainland and Taiwan, which greatly improved cross-Straits ties.

Ma's visit to the mainland has a deeper significance. It shows that many Taiwan residents still remember their ancestors. Ma is accompanied by young students who hopefully, through their exchanges with mainland students, will reduce hostility between people across the Straits and restore cross-Straits peace.

Ma's efforts to defuse cross-Straits tensions and restore peace should be welcomed by people on both sides of the Straits. And more people should follow his footsteps.

The author is a professor of cross-Straits relations and international relations at Fu Jen Catholic University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Kelsang Drolma

Today's Tibet evinces path to modernization

The development of Tibet and ethnic groups has always been one of the priorities for the central government. Based on equality, China's ethnic policy is aimed at realizing common prosperity and improving the lives and livelihoods of all ethnic groups. As such, the modernization of Tibet reflects Chinese-style modernization.

The modernization process of Tibet, however, has been arduous. By taking measures for the liberation of social productivity, the central authorities laid a solid foundation and gave the institutional guarantee for Tibet's modernization. Today, Tibet is a socialist society where all workers enjoy equal rights and freedom in all aspects of life.

Since the founding of the People's Republic, especially since the launch of reform and opening-up, the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people, including members of all ethnic groups, in promoting socialist modernization and adopting a modernization path with Chinese characteristics based on the reality of the situation.

Tibet's modernization process has followed the correct direction, and gradually developed its own characteristics. Agriculture and animal husbandry had been the main sources of income for the people in Tibet for thousands of years. Even in the 1950s, agriculture and animal husbandry accounted for 97.7 percent of the total production value in the region.

However, with the long-term support of the central government and the assistance of other provinces, the economic structure of Tibet has undergone a thor-

ough transformation. Although the agricultural output value of Tibet is at a historic high, the primary industry of agriculture and animal husbandry account for the smallest proportion of output value, while the secondary and tertiary industries, bolstered by modern economic elements, have been contributing more to Tibet's economy.

This indicates Tibet's economic structure is gradually improving. Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet in 1951, more than 90 percent of the people in the region were serfs who suffered super-economic exploitation. To change the situation, the central government led the Tibetan people in realizing development through socialist modernization practices, which helped them to emerge out of poverty and pursue high-quality development.

The implementation of the poverty alleviation program helped fulfill the Party's promise of leaving no one behind on the road to realize moderate prosperity, as it ensured all 74 counties in Tibet, the only provincial-level contiguous poverty-stricken region in China were lifted out of poverty by the end of 2019. This also helped China realize the first centenary goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

Before liberation, Tibet was a hierarchical society where most people were poor, lacked economic autonomy, and led a miserable life, forcing them to pin all their hopes on the afterlife.

After the peaceful liberation of Tibet, however, the construction of Qinghai-Tibet and Sichuan-Tibet highways greatly shortened the distance between Tibet

and the rest of the country. And the establishment of new schools allowed the people of the plateau to see a different world, a world of modern education.

These democratic reforms following the liberation of Tibet helped overthrow the old system, allowing the Tibetan people to live with dignity, exercise freedom of action, and adopt modern ways in a socialist democratic country. Today, their rights are protected by national laws and regulations, and their needs are met.

In order to improve the Tibetan people's sense of gain and happiness, more than 80 percent of Tibet's budget is devoted to improving people's livelihoods. In fact, Tibetan people's livelihoods have been improving at a faster rate than the national and central-western region's average. In particular, the development of education, healthcare and other sectors has greatly improved the material and spiritual lives of the Tibetan people.

Laws and regulations related to the protection and development of ethnic languages and scripts included in China's Constitution allow Tibetan cultural texts, written in the Tibetan script, to be disseminated not only through books and classrooms but also through television and the internet.

The Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau has the world's most unique and harshest terrain with unusual distribution of species. To protect this magnificent plateau, the central government has been promoting green and sustainable development in Tibet. It has also launched large-scale environmental protection projects, including reverting farmlands to forests

and grasslands, and provided exemplary financial support for Tibet's green development. For example, from 2012 to 2022, the central government allocated 29.28 billion yuan (\$4.28 billion) in subsidies and rewards for the conservation of grassland ecology in Tibet.

Indeed, Tibet is taking big strides toward modernization that is in harmony with nature and conforms to the central government's new Tibet governance policy, which upholds the Party's leadership, the socialist system with Chinese characteristics and the system of regional ethnic autonomy, while strengthening ethnic unity.

As of 2017, Tibet's GDP growth rate had been in double digits for 24 consecutive years, the highest in the country. And as Tibet has been focusing more on high-quality development since 2018, the traditional barriers to industrial development have been broken, and green development enabled by industrial empowerment has accelerated, while digital industrialization has evolved rapidly and technological innovations have become a driver of the region's development.

While the development achievements of Tibet are the result of the unity and hard work of all ethnic groups living in the autonomous region, the modernization of Tibet is an apt example of what the Chinese modernization model can achieve.

The author is a researcher at the China Tibetology Research Center. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

GLOBAL VIEWS

JU JIANDONG

Cost-effective opportunity

China's capital account should be opened to boost the international status of the renminbi

The global value chains increasingly feature three pillars: Asia with the Chinese market at the core, Europe with the German market at the center, and North America with the US market as its cornerstone. There is a contradiction between the tripartite economic structure and the dollar-dominated international monetary system. Among them, the international position of the US dollar is higher than the economic strength of the United States, while that of the renminbi is lower than China's economic strength. China's GDP accounts for about 18 percent of the world total, and the trading share of the renminbi in the global foreign exchange market is around 3.5 percent; The US GDP accounts for 24.65 percent of the global GDP, and the US dollar accounts for approximately 44 percent of global foreign exchange transactions. Judging from the share of GDP in the world economy, the dollar's share in global foreign exchange transactions is about 19 percentage points higher than the US' GDP share, while the renminbi share is about 14 percentage points lower than China's share of the global GDP. There is a mismatch and imbalance between the international status of the renminbi and China's economic status.

The dollar's dominant status as the international reserve currency is the principal competitiveness of the US, and it has to use the dollar to protect its economy and boost its economic growth. For example, the country's reindustrialization, high-tech war against China, and the distribution of cash to low-income families during the COVID-19 pandemic could all be achieved through the issuance of currency. From a historical perspective, if the dollar exchange rate faces significant depreciation pressure after printing money, the US may even launch military action. Because the

dollar is the dominant international currency, after the US creates turbulence and risks, global capital will flow to the US to lower the exposure to risks, which further consolidates the dollar's status as an international currency.

The dollar has two main advantages for the US. One is to collect seigniorage from around the world, as it is the most widely used currency in the world. The second is to impose financial sanctions on other countries. After the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, on the one hand, the US announced that it would not send any military personnel to the battlefield, and on the other hand, it imposed severe financial sanctions by cutting off the access to and use of dollars on countries being sanctioned. Given the above importance of the dollar's status, the US is committed to safeguarding the dollar's international status.

In fact, the establishment of a new international monetary system is conducive to world peace, and will be beneficial to both China and the US. Currently, due to the superiority of the dollar, the US economy is excessively virtualized and financialized, which has brought about serious inequality between the rich and the poor in the US society. The reform of the international monetary system conforms to the development of the global economic pattern, and it is conducive to overcoming the persistent disease of excessive financialization in the US and it would help improve the well-being of the US people.

China is in the process of gradually opening up its capital account as the sudden opening of its capital account might lead to capital flight and increase the risk of a financial crisis. Thus, the key is to seek policy designs that help open the capital account while effectively preventing financial risks.

In some cases, the opportunity cost of abandoning the existing sys-



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

tem is lower when competing in new arena, so it has a latecomer advantage. In the face of mutant technological innovation, the pace-makers are put in a tight spot instead. If the "race track" is switched or there is mutant technological innovation, the renminbi may not necessarily lag behind but may surpass the dollar in their competition.

Currently, the international monetary system is facing reform, and

the renminbi can achieve a breakthrough in its status as an international currency through monetary policy innovation and monetary technology innovation.

First, through monetary policy innovation, China can effectively prevent international financial risks while opening the capital account. For example, through the policy design of the progressive tax on cross-border capital flows, a "firewall" can be set up for cross-

border capital flows before opening the capital account. When China's capital account is opened and the free convertibility of the renminbi is achieved, the dilemma mentioned above will be addressed. Why doesn't the US adopt a progressive taxation on cross-border capital flows? The answer is the logic of "switching the track". The US has an absolute advantage in the existing international monetary system with free capital flow and

does not want to change the status quo. China is not in the same situation. Although it does not have an advantage in the existing international monetary system, installing a "firewall" provides it with "armor" against risks.

The second is to achieve the renminbi's transcendence through monetary technology innovation. Global monetary technology has changed from gold and silver to fiat currencies. The emergence of digital technology has enabled the international monetary system to develop toward the use of digital currencies. In this context, the more advanced the countries in the existing international monetary system are, the more difficult it will become for them to give up their advantages in the current system. This means that the renminbi may not necessarily fall behind the dollar in their competition. If China can seize the current opportunity to innovate the entire system through introducing and popularizing its digital currency and establish a digital international monetary system, it still has the opportunity to be a leap frog in the current international monetary system.

It is a key issue that China needs to ponder: How to achieve transcendence through abrupt policy and technological innovation in the international monetary system, establish latecomer advantages, make bold breakthroughs, and seize the initiative in the international monetary competition.

The author is unigroup chair professor of finance at PBC School of Finance at Tsinghua University and the director of the Center for International Finance and Economic Research at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CUI XIAOMIN AND SU QINGYI

Vitalized partnership

China and Russia continue to strengthen their economic and trade cooperation

Led by the high-level interactions between China and Russia, the two countries have opened a new chapter of friendship, cooperation and common development, evidenced by their increasingly close bilateral economic and trade relations.

In 2022, bilateral trade hit a record high of \$190.3 billion, approaching the trade target of reaching \$200 billion by 2024 previously set by the two heads of state.

In February, bilateral imports and exports continued to deliver strong double-digit growth, providing an important stabilizing force for Chinese trade.

The bilateral trade between China and Russia is of high complementarity and of strategic importance. According to the index of revealed comparative advantage of imports and exports of the two countries, in 2020, China's exports of 43 goods and two services showed a strong complementary relationship with Russian imports. Most of these goods were from labor-intensive industries, including fur, ceramics, railway locomotives, toys, base metal products and textiles and clothing; while the service sectors were construction, tourism and other business services.

Notably, in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the complementarity of trade in construction and transportation between China and Russia has grown significantly. As for Russia, its exports of 15 goods and three services are strongly complementary with China's imports, including metal products, minerals, wood products and agricultural products.

Russia is one of China's most important suppliers of crude oil, timber, charcoal and wood products. In addition, bilateral trade and economic cooperation between China and Russia is also of great



JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

significance to the development of Northeast China and the Russian Far East, and the two countries are steadily advancing their cooperation in energy, aerospace, infrastructure, science and technology innovation and cross-border e-commerce.

In the continuum of the global value chain, China-Russia trade is strongly collaborative. China's exports include a certain amount of

foreign value added. On the other hand, Russia is located in the relatively upper reaches of the value chain, and its value added is mostly included in the exports of downstream countries.

Compared with traditional trade indicators, China's reliance on Russia's value added has shown an increase not only in the importance of bilateral interaction, but also in the range of industries involved,

especially mining and quarrying, timber and cork products, coke and refined petroleum products, wholesale and retail, and transportation and storage.

As the world is undergoing profound changes, bilateral trade and economic cooperation between China and Russia faces rising uncertainty, highlighted by the triple impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts and

global environmental policy adjustments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the restructuring of the global industry chains, prompting a shift from prioritizing efficiency to balancing both efficiency and security. This poses challenges and opportunities for the economic development and trade cooperation of China and Russia.

With the US and Western coun-

tries tightening their economic sanctions against Russia and sending weapons and equipment to Ukraine, the situation is worsening. In addition, the US is using the Ukraine crisis to smear China and force other countries to take sides, exposing China and Russia, and even the world, to serious political interference in normal economic and trade activities.

The push for the green transformation of the global industry chains has presented China and Russia different sets of challenges. As the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter, China is pressed for time to achieve its pledge to peak its carbon emissions before 2030 and realize carbon neutrality before 2060.

Russia, on the other hand, is facing the pressure of declining long-term demand for traditional energy, and the urgent need to transform the structure of its energy industry.

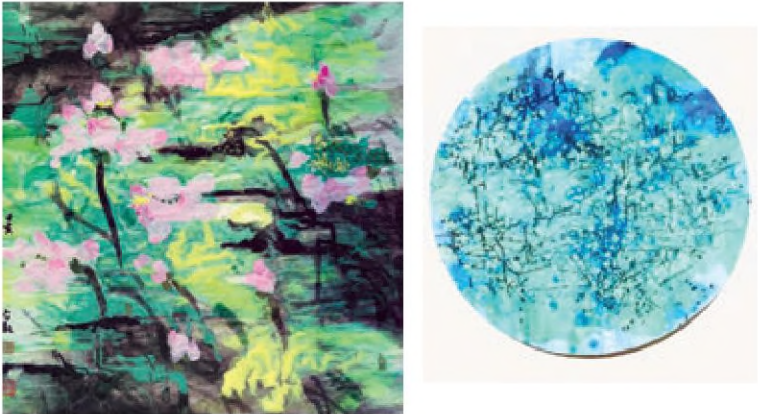
In the context of carbon neutrality, there is potential for China and Russia to collaborate in energy supply and demand. For example, to meet the growing demand for natural gas, China can step up cooperation with Russia in natural gas exploration and production, transportation and distribution, as well as storage and reception.

Cui Xiaomin is an associate research fellow of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the National Institute for Global Strategy at the CASS. Su Qingyi is a research fellow of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the CASS and the National Institute for Global Strategy at the CASS. The authors contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LIFE



Left: The 2-meter-high Chinese painting by artist Kuku Chai Bu-kuk, commissioned by Hong Kong International Airport in 2011, is on permanent display in the airport's Terminal 1. The artist's skillful use of Chinese ink, watercolor and monotyping techniques presents a spectacular view of Hong Kong's iconic Victoria Harbour as seen from The Peak. The melding of traditional and contemporary techniques portrays a modern and futuristic city. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: Chai's works are a blend of the painting styles of Chinese realism and Western impressionism, offering a glimpse of the artist's eclectic mindset, which she has been dedicated to imparting to budding artists in Hong Kong and the mainland.

A miniature of 'East-meets-West' eclecticism

Artist's skillful use of elements interprets the unique cultural persona of 'Asia's world city', **Wang Yuke** reports.

Waxing lyrical about her artistic experiments by blending the essence of traditional Chinese painting with the Western impressionist genre, Hong Kong-based Chinese artist Kuku Chai Bu-kuk walks her students through a mesmerizing artistic odyssey in her austere-looking studio in North Point on Hong Kong Island.

She dismantles the artistic language that defines her signature style, layer by layer, until it's cut to the pith — "zeitgeist" and "East-meets-West" — a tribute to the special administrative region's art and culture.

Arriving in the "Pearl of the Orient" by air, you may not immediately run into the city's energetic cadence and tempo of its hustle and bustle. You're likely to be greeted by a "Hong Kong Symphony" — a giant wall of paintings at Terminal 1 of Hong Kong International Airport, framed in LED panels, capturing the glitz of the city's dense forest of skyscrapers, the glimmer of its landmark Victoria Harbour, and the giddiness of the cosmopolitan temperament from a bird's-eye view.

The high-rise buildings towering in geometric color block forms and the strikingly detailed cruises dotted on the water like music notes offer you a sneak peek into the city's life — snappy, go-getting, and pulsating with vitality and a serious agenda. The brainchild of Chai, inspired by ink and watercolor paintings, as well as monotyping, is an apt showcase of the realistic and futuristic Hong Kong and a crossover of the inherent Chinese culture and Western influences. It isn't an overstatement to suggest that the well-orchestrated eclecticism radiating through Chai's paintings is a reflection of Hong Kong's kaleidoscopic culture writ large.

Chai, an arts consultant with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and director of the China Artists Association, has left the footprints of her works — paintings on paper or porcelain — across the globe through exhibitions, auctions and collections. Her works have become a permanent collection at the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's government London office, China International Fund Ltd and Tokyo-based Oji Paper Group. Former HKSAR chief executive Tung Chee-hwa collected Chai's works as well, with her work depicting Hong Kong's cityscape in gilded hues on display at Government House in Central — the official residence of the HKSAR's chief executive.

By any stretch, Chai's works are the face of Hong Kong's art and cultural resume. The wanderlust nature of her artistic pursuits and the expansive reach of her artworks embody the SAR's cultural influence on a global setting.

Fusion of influences

There's a penetrating soul in Chai's art that strikes a chord among viewers, but they cannot even start to describe what the emotional echoing is precisely, probably because her artistic language, sensibility and style are too culturally storied in depth and width to grasp.

Boiling Chai's artistic style down into a category or genre does little justice because it distills the artistic finesse of the East, primarily China and Japan, and the technical and aesthetic influences of the West that she had spent more than four decades trying to absorb and assimilate. If asked to name the most profound influences on her artistic lexicon, Chai would give credit to three legendary figures from China — Fu Baoshi, Zhang Daqian, Ren Bonian — and France's Claude Monet.

Spearheading the New Chinese Painting Movement dedicated to modernizing the traditional Chinese style, Fu Baoshi (1904-65) vouched for spontaneity, audacity and

improvisation in landscape ink painting by splattering and throwing ink or paint onto the canvas. It is this "throw-it-against-the-wall-and-see-what-sticks" artistry and his dexterity with paintbrushes that made Chai sit up and take notice in her early art career.

"Instead of using ink-soaked brushes, I applied and slithered brushes with dry and tough tips against the paper to create a slightly granular and coarse texture, rendering the mountain ridges abrasive, stoic and grandiose," she says, adding she's astonished by such a novel execution of brushes in Chinese painting, which surprisingly imbued the natural landscape with a human-like temperament.

The "splashing technique" mastered by Zhang Daqian (1899-1983) was another early inspiration for Chai, with ink and colors poured and splattered with wild abandon, creating an embellishing and cascading effect, with the contours melding into a blurry periphery. "The willfully abstract depiction of nature created an ethereal aura that was hardly achieved in conventional Chinese paintings," says Chai. The "splash" of colors results in the "broken" in colors (meaning colors dissolving into each other) — "splash" and "broken" are both pronounced *po* in Chinese — quips Chai, and which later proliferates in her art.

Ren Bonian (1840-96), although bearing the hallmarks of Chinese realistic paintings, was one of the early bastions of the Western freestyle in China. "So exquisitely down-to-earth and accessible was his art that it garnered a wide reach. His versatility and his works' capacity of resonating even with the uninitiated impressed me," recalls Chai.

The three Chinese iconic artists, who had a profound heft on Chai's artistic explorations, share a common denominator despite being prominent in different periods of history. "They were all a bit ahead of their time, and were trailblazers in their quest for a 'zeitgeist' and future-proof artistic voice," says Chai. "An art without a zeitgeist relevance is doomed to be the denominator of the era, meaning being easily eclipsed and obliterated," she says.

In the constantly evolving art realm, Chai says, artists have to keep their ears to the ground, casting their vision beyond the original locale of their cultural exposure, extracting and appropriating the wisdom of other cultures in a good way, to ensure that their art has an enduring relevance.

This is the answer Chai chanced upon at Paris' Musee de l'Orangerie in the 1990s to the problem that had eluded her for long: "I can't simply copy the works of the three Chinese art virtuosos. But how could I possibly go a step further?"

The eureka moment hit her the instant she saw the masterpieces by Claude Monet — the "Father of the Impressionism Movement".

"I vividly remember standing in front of his 'water lily pond,' fixated, overwhelmed, petrified, lost for words... with tears welled up in my eyes," Chai recalls, saying she'll never forget that euphoria of serendipity as if being able to bottle lightning.

"I felt as if an electric current passed through my body all the way to the top of my head, where a window was flung open to a new world," she says, describing the encounter as "life-changing". The glimmer of light and reflection of the sky flickering on the water, the serene crystalline water that extends to unperceivable borders, defined brilliantly by the gradation of light and shade captured by Monet from dusk to dawn, touched her soul.

"It dawned on me how potent an



Chinese artist Kuku Chai Bu-kuk cut her teeth on painting from childhood under her family's artistic influence and came to Hong Kong in the 1990s, pioneering art education and establishing her artistic presence across the world.



Above and Below: Chai channels her "East-meets-West" artistic language on ceramics, an immaculately slick alternative medium to paper canvas.



exact depiction of light and shadow could be to coax the idyll out of the painted landscape and trigger a visceral pleasure in viewers, which wasn't emphasized in early Chinese painting," says Chai. She explains that the idea of a light spectrum was on people's radars earlier in the West than in China.

"A viewer would expect to see the vein of mist shrouding a bamboo bush, catch a whiff of aroma from a teapot, feel the haze enveloping the rolling mountains. Such sensory pleasures have to be given weight in a painting in equal measure with the precise depiction of the objects."

Her mental block in art creation was solved by fusing the sophistication in Chinese realistic paintings with the prowess in Western impressionist style, highlighting the subtlety of light and shadow. "Yes, light and shadow," she accentuates.

"Well," says Chai, clapping her hands, "it's time to cut to the chase, talking about my porcelain painting!" Without understanding the genesis of eclecticism that oozes throughout her brushstrokes on paper, you would not be able to wrap your head around the ingenuity in her porcelain painting or "artistic porcelain" as she prefers to call it.

Zeitgeisty art on porcelain

The "juxtaposition of East and West" is a common thread in Chai's art, becoming her signature theme, while the medium for communicating the eclectic idea is not confined to paper. Transcending the utility and ornamental purpose, porcelain, to her, is an immaculate alternative to canvas paper amplifying the "East-meets-West" ethos, and a clean sheet for her artistic flair to be awakened afresh.

Nevertheless, it's far from straightforward to translate the brushstroke techniques employed in painting onto the slick three-dimensional canvas — ceramics — because it takes repetitive firing and drying in the kiln, during which myriad colors are applied layer by layer. How the colors interact with each other and make their presence felt hinges on the temperature of firing, the humidity of the ceramic surface and, of course, the artist's sensibility to hues and command of the paintbrush.

It's a herculean feat to choreograph the movement of colors to achieve the intended effect. For example, Chai explains, if the surface is too damp, colors will muddle together in a blur. If it's left to dry for too long, each pigment will stick to the parched surface in isolation, with contours rigidly defined, where the subtlety and fluidity embodied in impressionism are lost.

Everything has to be "just right" in the art of porcelain painting, she insists. It's quite an art of "accuracy" and "precision".

Her ceramic canvas is from Liling — a county-level city in Hunan province.

What sets Liling porcelain apart from those from other regions or countries is its pristine purity and immaculate slickness. Cradling a dainty teacup molded out of Liling ceramics, and swirling it gently under a beam of light, like a wine connoisseur swiveling the goblet to gauge the tipples' quality, Chai explains. "Look at the translucent, almost see-through body. You can barely spot any blemish or minute dent," she says.

The abundance of assorted natural minerals in Liling is a rich seam to mine for porcelain painting as they provide a palette of vivid colors. Moreover, the paints sourced from the local natural minerals are edible, Chai says, making them safe for domestic use.

Liling, famed as one of China's three "ceramic capitals", along with Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province and Dehua

county in Fujian province, boasts a 2,000-year history in ceramic production. While Jingdezhen might be synonymous with Chinese ceramics, Chai notes that Liling porcelain ware is a contemporary representation, omnipresent in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

A petite cup that could affectionately sit in a palm takes pride of place on Chai's workbench, where a Lionhead Goldfish — a symbol of wealth and harmony in Chinese culture — appears in glowing relief. Its crimson-hued head crown and fluttering giant tail in cherry blossom color bring it to life.

"Touch it," Chai says before handing it over. It turns out that the black specks of fish scale jut out of the surface slightly, turning the ware palpably textured and animated. "The paints have extractions of agate and emerald which, when fused with gold, can better dissolve," she explains. "It's fired at 1,380 C, sharp, neither higher nor lower. Only the pitch-perfect temperature can yield the desired watered-down colors and render a hazy effect to create gradations between different colors (seen in impressionist art)."

In essence, Chai is grafting the eclecticism of Chinese realism and Western impressionism onto her porcelain improvisation. In other words, the approach on paper still applies to ceramics, while the "water" as a medium to meld the colors on paper is substituted with "fire" or "temperature" in china painting.

A close examination of her porcelain painting following her explanation leads to more riveting discoveries — the goldfish's tail unfurls like a velvety plume as the pinkish shades of color fade into the periphery; the fall leaves ablaze in shades of color, from chrome yellow to amber yellow to a residue of fiery red and to something in between, transport one to the restful autumn; a basin ornate with a boldly colored lotus flower punctuated with dragonflies and frogs in pops of color is brimming with vitality that is about to spill over the edge.

It would be too reductive to summarize Chai's art as the juxtaposition of "Chinese realism" and "Western impressionism" because her art musings, in no small measure, are informed by aesthetic influences from Southeast Asia, unconsciously. It's an unscripted influence seeping into her artistic creation and "nourishes" her artistic license, as she puts it. For example, the elaborate embroidery and the lacquered wood-carving craftsmanship in Myanmar and Thailand, and the Arabic classic motifs and seamless patterns garnishing the quaint gilded wares — such inspirational sustenance from the East works in harmony with Western techniques, and makes for an "East-meets-West" pathos in Chai's art, which offers the best interpretation of Hong Kong's art and cultural persona.

A graduate of the Art College of Nanjing Normal University — one of the pioneering academies promoting art education in China — Chai has carried the mission of art education throughout her art trajectory. Apart from teaching in private workshops, she's an instructor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's School of Continuing and Professional Studies, adjunct professor of the Beijing Institute of Technology, and a visiting professor at Xinjiang Normal University.

"Imparting and articulating the 'East-meets-West' artistic essence with accessible eloquence to emerging artists is nothing short of a skill. But, I'm blessed with the vantage point offered by Hong Kong to pollinate the eclectic mindset in the multicultural artistic garden," enthuses Chai.

Contact the writer at jenny@chinadailyhk.com

LIFE

Addressing the situation

Qipao maker spots an opportunity to make his version of the quintessential garment, Yang Felyue reports.

An urge to make things easier for his wife has surprisingly changed the career trajectory of Jin Yi. With a measuring tape and a pair of scissors by his side practically all the time at his workshop in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, Jin, in his 30s, is committed to restoring the glamour of the *qipao*, a traditional Chinese dress also known as *cheongsam*, which features a form-fitting cut, high neckline and the slit on the side of the skirt.

"We've been extremely busy after Spring Festival, with orders for custom-made *qipao* piling up," says Jin, from Xushuguan town, Suzhou.

"Normally, we promised to deliver goods in 10 to 15 days, but now it has to be in 40 to 50 days," he adds.

Jin says he and his team have been working for more than 12 hours every day.

When Jin receives an order, he goes to great lengths to get to know his customer's needs before coming up with pertinent style, color scheme, embroidery and fabric.

"The colors and patterns should vary with different occasions," Jin explains.

For example, a bride would be recommended to wear a bright red *qipao* with peony and butterfly images, while her mother would be advised to dress in a darker red with more shiny flowers.

"After all is settled, I need to communicate and work with master tailors before delivering a *qipao*," Jin explains.

The prices vary from 1,500 yuan (\$218) to 8,000 yuan, depending on fabrics and embroidering methods.

Jin's present career is a far cry from his previous one at a construction company. That role perfectly suited his civil engineering background after attending a Suzhou college from 2003 to 2006.

His decision to change his job started with a downpour of rain.

Jin's wife is a performer of *pingtan*, Chinese traditional storytelling and ballad-singing that originated in the Suzhou area. The role requires her to dress in a *qipao*.

On one occasion, Jin went with her to Shanghai when she needed to have a *qipao* customized. On their return to Suzhou, they encountered heavy rain, which kept them waiting for a long time at the train station.

Jin then started to wonder if they could find a *qipao* in the local shops.

They actually found several workshops on Guanqian Street in Suzhou that could make *qipao*. The local dresses were cheaper than those from Shanghai, but the choice of color and level of craftsmanship were less than desirable, he recalls.

"Almost everything was made by the sewing machine, and the technique of edging the fabric was not refined," Jin says.

That was when Jin saw an opportunity and decided to quit his job.

On one hand, he says he felt that the *qipao* was a classic and beautiful garment and should be made more available in his home area.

"I also wanted to make my wife happy," he says.

On the other hand, Jin says his previous job was not exactly how he had imagined it.

"I didn't like spending all day on a construction site," he adds.



Above and right: Two typical Suzhou-styled *qipao* made by Jin Yi.

He first went to the neighboring towns and rural areas in search of older tailors, in the hope of getting the "recipe" to make an elegant *qipao*.

But the efforts were in vain. "They happened to enter the trade when the popularity of the *qipao* was at a low ebb," Jin explains.

Fashion symbol

Qipao first emerged in the 1920s as a loosefitting dress that was not commonly worn by women as it looked similar to the one-piece gowns that men wore.

It was around the 1930s that the dress started becoming a means of accentuating one's curves as Hong-bang tailors from Ningbo, Zhejiang province, who were adept at sewing Chinese tunic dresses and Western-style suits, began pioneering a new style.

It didn't take long for the outfit to become a must-have item for fashion-savvy women in Shanghai, which was considered the fashion capital of the nation.

Shen Huiqin, director of the Shanghai Qipao Culture Promotion Association, says: "Although there are many *cheongsam* styles in China, the first thing that comes to mind when one mentions this dress is the scene of a woman in a *qipao* walking along the Bund."

But the "cultural revolution" (1966-76) saw this hotly sought-after dress disappear almost completely as it was deemed a bourgeois symbol, according to Shen.

It was only in the 1990s that it started making a comeback.

In 2007, Jin went on a quest of treasure-hunting at antique stores

The distinguishing feature of the traditional Suzhou-styled *qipao* is that it may not look particularly special from afar, but upon closer inspection, one can spot delicately embroidered flowers on the collar or hem, which gives off an air of sophistication and reflects the reserved nature of Suzhou people."

Jin Yi, inheritor of handmade *qipao*



Jin Yi wants to add new vitality to the making of the traditional dress, also known as *cheongsam*.

that were scattered across the country.

"I figured I could get some clues from the original *qipao*," he says.

He still remembers his first find at a local antique shop in 2007. It was a navy blue *qipao* from a period between the 1910s and the 1940s.

Then, he found a few experienced tailors who were good at making traditional cloths to decipher the code by carefully dismantling the delicate dress.

"We looked into its materials and details like rolled hems and buckles," Jin says.

Then, many secrets started to reveal themselves.

"Take the small buckles for example, they have managed to stay sturdy and upright after decades, because of the application of wax," Jin says.

He came upon the discovery after he accidentally found a sticky substance under his fingernails when studying the historical *qipao*.

After looking into it, he found the wax was used to seal in the "thick paste" made of cornstarch.

"This starch is necessary during ironing and pressing the silk to keep it firm. However, it is lost during washing, so wax has to be applied," Jin says.

As Jin continued to collect antique *qipao*, more traditional methods were brought to light.

"We found the button buckles had also been pressed by an iron plate overnight to make them more resistant against deformation," Jin says.

Although this traditional *qipao*-making process may seem cumbersome, it has ensured the clothes maintain their shape even after

years of use and multiple washing, he adds.

It cost Jin more than 20 old pieces of *qipao* before he grasped the delicate techniques.

"Fortunately, a regular old *qipao* was not that expensive as it is today, and it only cost a few hundred yuan back then, so I could afford it," Jin says.

Devotion to craft

He also picked up cloth-making techniques.

"The master tailors understood the structure of tailoring very well, and I learned and practiced by their side every day," Jin recalls.

He came to realize that it might be relatively easy to learn all the techniques, but it takes a long time to get them down to a fine art.

"I was impressed by their (master tailors') serious attitude and striving for precision," Jin says.

"They focus on every detail and make sure it's done perfectly."

In 2010, Jin was able to independently craft *qipao*, and his first work was a light beige dress with black flowers.

"It was for my wife, and she loved it," Jin says.

The success fueled his passion to continue to study and hone his skills.

The *qipao* in Suzhou varies from its counterparts in Shanghai, in terms of cloth choice and patterns, because of the differences in local culture.

Shanghai-styled *qipao* highlights layered color schemes on the edges, but the Suzhou-styled tends to use just one color, he explains.

"Even the delicate embroidery is done with thread that matches the color of the fabric," Jin says.

"The distinguishing feature of the traditional Suzhou-styled *qipao* is that it may not look particularly special from afar, but upon closer inspection, one can spot delicately embroidered flowers on the collar or hem, which gives off an air of sophistication and reflects the reserved nature of Suzhou people."

Yet, the technique is almost the same.

"We are sticking to the traditional methods popular in the period from the 1910s to the 1940s," Jin says.

He has also tried to integrate *yun-jin* and *song-jin*, two kinds of ancient brocades, with an aim to bring new vitality to the *qipao*.

His dedication and skills have earned him the title of an intangible cultural heritage inheritor of handmade *qipao* by Suzhou's culture, radio, television and tourism bureau in January.

He has attended various lectures at local communities and schools to popularize the traditional dress and its cultural significance.

His collection of vintage *qipao* has also grown to more than 600 pieces from across the country, especially Shanghai, Hong Kong and Jiangsu's Suzhou and Nanjing.

It has inspired him to expand his collection to include *qipao*-related items, such as accessories, needlework and old-fashioned iron.

"I'd like to build a museum of traditional *qipao*," Jin says.

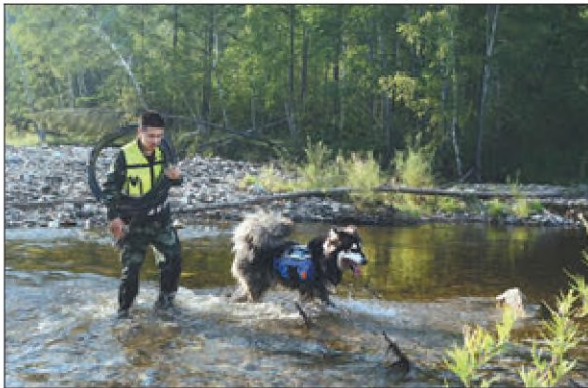
"I'm working on it now, and hopefully more people will better appreciate the *qipao*."

Contact the writer at yangfelyue@chinadaily.com.cn



Left and right: Jin Yi works with an older master tailor on the design and the making of buckles of *qipao* at his workshop in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. Center: Jin has collected more than 600 vintage *qipao* from across the country over the years, including one piece featuring silver-laced patterns. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIFE



From left: Signal maintenance technician Chai Ruifeng is the only employee at the Moridaga subsidiary office of China Telecom, with his only companion being an Alaskan Malamute; Chai makes urgent repairs on telecommunication infrastructure in the primary forests in the north of the Greater Hinggan Mountains; and he digs the wheel of his pickup truck out of the snow after getting stuck. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For signal maintenance technician Chai Ruifeng, Nov 4, 2019, is a day to remember. He set off on what he thought would be a typical day on duty, driving through the primary forests in the north of the Greater Hinggan Mountains carrying out emergency equipment repair.

However, his pickup truck broke down on a snow-covered mountain road, and there was no rescue service available. He was forced to walk for six and a half hours to get help at the nearest telecommunication base station.

"I am finally home, and I'm alive," Chai recalls saying to himself the moment he finally saw a building with its lights on through the dark, cold night.

"My mind went blank, and I kept going. It felt like, in the end, that my legs were taking the steps forward by themselves. As night fell, I was also scared of running into wild animals. When I saw the lights, I felt happier than I'd ever been. Any place with lights on would have felt like a home at the time."

For 14 years, Chai has been working as a technician at the Moridaga subsidiary office, Hulunbuir branch of China Telecom, in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. Since 2016, he has been the office's only employee.

Moridaga, a remote border town, has an average annual temperature of around -6 C, and a record low of -56 C.

All year round, Chai roams the primary forests covering 12,000 square kilometers in his pick-up truck, his only companion being an Alaskan Malamute called Hu'niuer.

Together, they have been through thick and thin, trudging through the deep snow, camping in the wilderness and occasionally confronting wild animals living in the forests.

The area Chai oversees includes more than 50 base stations, the nearest 10 km from the company, and the farthest 400 km, which takes him eight or nine hours to reach.

Most of these stations are built on the top of mountains and cannot be reached by car. He has to climb the mountain tracks, sometimes as far as 4 km, carrying heavy equipment.

Apart from the long distances and arduous journeys, Chai also constantly faces danger from extreme weather and wildlife.

"During most of my trips, I cannot rest, because of the distance and the scarcity of people. Sometimes when I get too drowsy, I get out of the truck and wipe my face with snow, or turn the music up as loud as it can be to keep myself awake," he says.

"In the winter here, the sun sets after 3 o'clock. Once the sky gets

Lone technician delivers peak performance

Despite hardships, Chai Ruifeng diligently maintains vital infrastructure in a remote mountain area, report **Cheng Yuezhu** and **Yuan Hui**.



Above: Chai Ruifeng climbs a utility pole to check and maintain telecommunication cables, as spring brings more risks of fire.

Below: Chai wipes snow off solar panels that supply power for telecommunication base stations in the area. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

dark, I cannot see the tracks clearly, and it gets even more dangerous."

The tracks in the forest region are particularly hazardous, Chai says. In winters, hot spring water freezes and collects on the roads, forming sheets of ice that can extend up to several kilometers and amass as high as several meters.

Drivers who let their guard down might think they are just flat, icy roads, not knowing that there is still running water underneath. Once the ice cracks, the cars will be trapped.

Chai cannot recall how many times he has been trapped on these roads. With no residents nearby and no signal to contact rescue, he has sometimes had to wait for as long as 10 hours overnight in temperatures below -40 C.



Some of these hardships have lessened since the company equipped him with a satellite phone, but with improved ecologi-

cal protection, he has been encountering all kinds of wild animals, including bears, wolves and lynxes. "Once, I looked up and, just 4

meters away, I saw a black bear staring at me. I climbed up the nearest pine tree and waited for the rescue," Chai says.

"It is said that people experience a burst of energy when facing threats. As a result of that experience, I believe it, because, later, I tried to climb that same tree and couldn't."

Persevering with the job is not the result of yearning for adventure. In fact, growing up in Moridaga, he had been bored with the sight of trees and mountains, and longed to leave them to pursue a life in a big city.

His parents persuaded him to apply for the position after he graduated from university, saying that, as a young person, he should find a

position where he could realize his value, instead of wanting too much from life.

At first, he worked in a team of 15 people. However, when commercial logging was prohibited, many of his colleagues moved away with their families, members of which had been working in the logging industry.

"With fewer colleagues, I had to take on more responsibilities. But now, when I reflect on these experiences, I feel they are very meaningful. People have to endure hardship in order to grow," he says.

As the only one maintaining and repairing signal infrastructure in the border area, Chai has also become a link between the local border defense soldiers and grassroots workers and their families.

Wang Zhen from Qiqian station, Greater Hinggan Mountains branch of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Forest Fire Brigade, has known Chai for more than 10 years.

He says the team members all consider Chai as an older brother. Every time Chai goes to their station, he always contacts them, and nearby residents, in advance to ask if they need him to buy anything for them.

"Through our conversations, I know that he wanted to become a soldier as a child. I feel that, although he is not one, he has a soldier's qualities, such as resolution and willpower in the face of challenges," Wang says.

Wang remembers one incident vividly. It happened in December 2015, when their station lost its signal. Chai ran some tests and found that the fiber-optic cables had been broken more than 20 km away. For an entire week, he took a few firefighters out with him early in the morning, dug the cables out and fixed them.

"There were many such occasions, which we thought we faced an impossible task, but he persisted as long as he could see a glimmer of hope," Wang adds.

For the past decade, Chai has observed changes in the region: Roads are being laid and improved, more telecommunication base stations have been built, and it is easier for the residents to contact others or use the internet.

"Although I'm the only one who has stayed here for 14 years, I am never alone, as I've always been supported by my family, the locals and the company," Chai says.

"It is my mission to work among the forests. There is still a lot to be done. For me, the fundamentals are to do my job well and be a responsible and useful member of society."

Contact the writers at chengyuezhu@chinadaily.com.cn

Annual campaign to dispose of expired medicine begins

By **XU LIN**
xulin@chinadaily.com.cn

Pharmacist Li Xiaoyan is busy receiving an elderly couple who came specially to dispose of their expired medicines. She carefully registers the information of the drugs and gives the couple a small pack of common household medicines in return.

It's the sixth year since the pharmacy participated in the recycling of expired household medicines, a national public welfare activity started by Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holdings Ltd in 2004.

From March to April, over 6,000 brick-and-mortar pharmacies in 200 cities across China embark on the annual campaign, recycling expired medicines. Customers can receive common household medicines or daily use items provided by the pharmaceutical company as a reward.

They can also deliver their expired drugs to the company's pharmacy on Alibaba's e-commerce platform Tmall, in exchange for online shopping coupons that can be used in the pharmacy.

For the past 20 years, the corporation has collected more than 1,600 metric tons of expired medicines, which have been properly disposed of. It has expanded to accept expired drugs produced by other pharmaceutical companies and calls on its counterparts to participate.

Through the activity, many customers have gradually realized that throwing expired drugs in the trash bin can not only pose a safety hazard, but also cause environmental pollution.

"Citizens in the neighborhood have raised their awareness. When their household pharmaceuticals are about to expire, they come and inquire as to when the next recycle

activity will start," says Li, who's in charge of the pharmacy in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

She says, often, the expired drugs that their customers deposit are those for treating chronic conditions and medication for common illnesses, such as colds, headaches and fever. When some patients with chronic illnesses change their prescriptions, they have to dispose of the old medicines.

This month, she says, between 50 and 70 people have visited the pharmacy every day, and sometimes had to stand in a line. Many are elderly people, and some are young people who purchase medicine for their parents.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, people in general have increased their household medicine reserves, as the demand for medication surged, making the recycling of expired medicines



An elderly man visits a pharmacy to dispose of his expired medicines in Guangzhou, Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

more essential.

The corporation's chairman Li Chuyuan, a deputy to the National People's Congress, wrote in his proposal submitted to this year's two sessions — China's annual top legislative and political advisory meetings — that the recycling of expired household medicines should be legislated and management of such medicines should be strengthened.

"It's important to reduce the amount of expired household medicines from the source and establish a scientific concept for purchasing and using medicines," Li Chuyuan says. He calls on consumers to reasonably prepare medicines, regularly check them, and properly dispose of them.

Huang Haiwen, deputy general manager of a pharmaceutical factory of the corporation, recalls that they initiated the program because many customers built up their

medicine reserves during the SARS outbreak in 2003.

At that time, he and his colleagues had to persuade the elderly to believe that the medicine would be disposed of.

"It was part of our corporate social responsibility, and it was also good for our sales of medicines still within their validity period," he says.

According to Jiang Bin, deputy head of the Research Center of Public Policy, Peking University, in a survey done by her research group, 84 percent of the 6,278 subjects said they had a medicine reserve for their family. As for the disposal of expired medicine, only 17.6 percent chose to recycle them.

She suggests it's important to adopt a classification management approach to recycling pharmaceuticals, based on the varying environmental risks posed by different types of medicines.